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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Selections from His Writings

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EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY PHILIP S. FONER PH.D.

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS • NEW YORK

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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By the Same Author

BUSINESS AND SLAVERY
THOMAS JEFFERSON

Abraham Lincoln

SELECTIONS FROM HIS WRITINGS

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY

PHILIP S. FONER, PH.D.

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THE SYMBOL OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

BY PHILIP S. FONER

We often think of Lincoln as a product of the American frontier and as typically American as "the granite foundations of the Appalachian range." But if any American deserves the title "world citizen," it is Lincoln. The great Russian novelist Tolstoy once said of him:

"If one would know the greatness of Lincoln one should listen to the stories that are told about him in other parts of the world. I have been in wild places where one hears the name of America uttered with such mystery as if it were some heaven or hell. I have heard various tribes of barbarians discussing the New World, but I have heard this only in connection with the name Lincoln. Lincoln as the wonderful hero of America is known by the most primitive nations of Asia."¹

What was it that gave Lincoln this international stature? Why has he become the hero of the common people the world over? What made him the symbol of democracy to countless thousands irrespective of race, religion, or nationality? In part, of course, it was the story of his life which lifted Abe Lincoln to the position of a world figure.

Abraham Lincoln was born in Hardin County, Kentucky, on February 12, 1809, the son of the carpenter-farmer Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks Lincoln. His boyhood was spent on pioneer farms in Indiana in the midst of hardship and poverty. With little formal education—in all less than a year—he

¹ Quoted by Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* (N. Y., 1939), Vol. IV, p. 375.

was eager for knowledge and read and reread every book he could lay his hands on.

His first contact with slavery occurred while he was still a youth. Piloting a flat-boat to New Orleans, he witnessed the auctioning of slaves, an act which horrified him so that he resolved then and there to "hit slavery and hit it hard."

Later settling in New Salem, Illinois, "honest Abe," as he came to be known, clerked in a store, managed a flour mill, split rails, served as village postmaster, and studied law. His political life started when he was only twenty-five years old, serving as a member of the Whig Party in the Illinois state legislature from 1834 to 1841. Six years later, he was elected to Congress. In 1858, under the newly formed Republican Party, he became candidate for U. S. Senator from Illinois. During this campaign his series of debates with the Democratic incumbent, Stephen Douglas, the "Little Giant," stirred the nation. Although Lincoln lost the election, he became a national figure because of his firm opposition to the further extension of slavery. In 1860, he was nominated as the Republican candidate for President, and elected.

Concerned primarily with the preservation of the Union, Lincoln came to realize that in order to save the Union it was necessary to make the abolition of slavery a major objective of the war brought on by the southern slavocracy. In January, 1863, he issued the famous Emancipation Proclamation. That the nation approved his policies was made evident in November, 1864, when he was re-elected on a platform calling for vigorous prosecution of the war. On April 15, 1865, this great life was ended by an assassin's bullet, a few days after the Confederate army had surrendered and the Civil War had been brought to a close.

Almost as well known as his life are such utterances as these: "Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world?" "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. What ever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no

democracy." "In giving freedom to the slaves, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve."

Yet essentially it was because Lincoln emerged as the central figure in a world struggle for liberty that he was chosen by people in many lands to serve as their symbol of democracy. "Abraham Lincoln was not yours only," went a message from the people of Aureale, Sicily, to the people of the United States shortly after his death, "but was also ours because he was a brother whose great mind and fearless conscience guided a people to Union and courageously uprooted slavery."² And the working men of South London declared, in their "Address to the American People": "The name of Abraham Lincoln had become famous to the working people of England; he appeared as one of themselves, fighting the battle of freedom for all lands."³

Like Thomas Jefferson, Lincoln believed that Americans were not acting for themselves alone but for the whole human race. "The sympathies of this country," he wrote in 1852, "and the benefits of its position should be exerted in favor of the people of every nation struggling to be free."⁴ By its very existence the American union exerted a powerful influence in that direction. For America was the living answer to the cry of the reactionaries of Europe that the masses were too ignorant to be granted equal opportunities to participate in government and to obtain liberty, happiness, and security. What was it, Lincoln asked again and again, that enabled America to serve as a beacon-light to the oppressed people of every nation? And always he came to the same conclusion: it was the noble sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which asserted that all men are created free and equal and are en-

² *Appendix to Diplomatic Correspondence of 1865* (Washington, 1866), p. 434, also quoted in Andrew C. McLaughlin, "Lincoln as a World Figure," *Abraham Lincoln Association Papers* (1924), pp. 95-126.

³ *Appendix to Diplomatic Correspondence of 1865*, p. 265.

⁴ Arthur Brooks Lapsley, *Writings of Abraham Lincoln* (N. Y., 1905-06), Vol. II, 141-42.

dowed with inalienable rights among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It was "that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence," said Lincoln early in 1861, "which gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the world for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights would be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance."⁵

It was this principle that provides us with a key to understanding Lincoln's role in the struggle over slavery, which culminated in the Civil War, and his apparent contradictions and inconsistencies during the course of this struggle.

That Lincoln hated slavery is a conclusion that no one who has read the large body of his writings and speeches can escape. The very sight of Negro slaves, he once wrote, was "a continued torment to me . . . and continually exercises the power of making me miserable."⁶ Again and again Lincoln spoke of "the monstrous injustice of slavery itself." And at no time during his career did he fail to express his complete disagreement with the slaveowners and their northern allies who contended that slavery was a positive good. If slavery was not wrong, Lincoln cried, then nothing was wrong. Opposition to this monstrous injustice, he declared, was founded on men's essential love of justice. Hence no one who considered himself a just person could avoid the duty of opposing the system of human slavery.

But Lincoln's opposition to slavery was based on much more than a love for justice. He was convinced that slavery and the arguments that were brought forth to justify the enslaving of the Negro people were opening the way to the destruction of the liberties of all Americans. "I say," he declared, "that this charter of freedom [the Declaration of Independence] applies to the slave as well as to ourselves; that the class of argument put forward to combat that idea is also calculated to break

down the very idea of free government even for white men, and to undermine the very foundations of free society."⁷ Equally important was the fact that the very existence of slavery in America, by making a mockery of the Declaration of Independence, "deprived our Republican example of its just influence in the world," thereby reducing the ability to assist people of every country struggling to be free. Lincoln was well aware that the labor movement of England and France complained that in tolerating the existence of slavery the American people delivered a serious blow to the efforts of the European masses to establish democratic institutions in their countries.

"I have always hated slavery," Lincoln once said, "as much as any Abolitionist."⁸ Yet his having said this by no means made Lincoln an Abolitionist. He was quite ready to agree with the Abolitionists that slavery was an evil that must be removed from the American scene. He had respect for the courage of the men and women in the Abolitionist movement who faced social ostracism, imprisonment, and death itself to further the cause of emancipation. But, he argued, the southerners had the legal right to their slaves. To ignore that right would result in civil war and the disruption of the Union. He could not agree with those Abolitionists who proclaimed that the American Union was based on an artificial unity and that it would be better for the cause of liberty everywhere if the Union were dissolved.⁹

As Lincoln saw it, a disruption of the American Union would be the greatest tragedy that would befall a suffering world, for it would mean the destruction of "the last best hope on earth," and gladden the hearts of anti-democratic forces everywhere. Slavery was an evil, he said, but the dissolution of the Union was a greater evil. He was convinced that the Abolitionist doctrine that slavery be immediately abolished would result in the destruction of the Union. In addition, a

⁵ John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln* (N. Y., 1905), Vol. VI, p. 157. (Hereafter cited as Nicolay and Hay.)

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 282.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 344-45.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 174-75.

sudden abolition of slavery would bring in its wake economic chaos and still further disrupt the entire structure of the nation.

These convictions caused Lincoln to reject the Abolitionist program of immediate emancipation of the slaves. But in rejecting their program he did not call for a policy of non-collaboration with the Abolitionists under any and all circumstances. He was ready to unite with the Abolitionists in furthering the cause of certain immediate demands upon which he and they could agree.¹⁰ And it was Lincoln who finally paid the highest tribute to these heroic pioneers in the anti-slavery struggle, when he said, shortly after signing the Emancipation Proclamation: "I have been only an instrument. The logic and moral power of Garrison and the anti-slavery people of the country, and the Army have done all."¹¹

For many years Lincoln clung to the belief that it was possible to rid the country of slavery gradually, over a long period of time. This is not to say that he cherished the illusion that the slaveowners would themselves extinguish the institution of slavery. "The Autocrat of all the Russias," he wrote in 1855, "will resign his crown and proclaim his subjects free republicans sooner than will our American masters voluntarily give up their slaves."¹² But if slavery could be confined to the southern states, Lincoln argued, then it would be possible to bring about its extirpation gradually. Without new lands to feed upon, the "monstrous" institution would become unprofitable, and the way would be open to legislate it out of existence with compensation to the slaveholders for the loss of their property.

Lincoln's dream of gradually abolishing slavery was shared by many people in the North. Even Thaddeus Stevens, much closer to the Abolitionists than Lincoln, was con-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 243.

¹¹ Quoted by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Contemporaries* (Boston and N. Y., 1889), p. 247. William Lloyd Garrison, editor of *The Liberator*, was an outstanding leader of the Abolitionist movement.

¹² Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 279.

vinced that if slavery could be kept within the limits of the South it would eventually pass out of existence. And Robert Toombs, a leading spokesman for the slavocracy, declared: "In fifteen years more, without a great increase in slave territory, either the slaves must be permitted to flee from the whites, or the whites must flee from the slaves."¹³ Men like Toombs drew no distinction between Lincoln's program of locking up slavery in the South and that of the Abolitionists which called for the immediate emancipation of the slaves. If either of the two policies were adopted by the Government of the United States, they argued, their "peculiar institution" would be doomed.

By confining slavery to the South, Lincoln hoped not only to achieve its ultimate extinction but also to keep the unsettled territories of the national government for free labor. Here the oppressed of the world, the "Hans and Baptiste, and Patrick, and all other men from all the world," would "find new homes and better their condition in life."¹⁴ He knew enough of southern economic life to realize that once the slaveholders moved into the western lands, free laborers would be forced to move out. Slavery drove out free farmers and free laborers wherever it was allowed to exist.¹⁵ It was impossible therefore to cherish the hope that America should become a haven for the oppressed of all countries and at the same time remain indifferent to the efforts of the slaveowners to spread slavery into the unsettled territories.

Until 1854 Lincoln, as he himself phrased it, was "quiet" on the question of slavery.¹⁶ But this did not mean that he was indifferent to the entire issue. As early as 1848 he is said to have told William H. Seward: "We have got to deal with this slavery question, and have got to give much more atten-

¹³ Quoted by Karl Marx in an article for the *New York Daily Tribune*, Oct. 11, 1861. See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Civil War in the United States* (N. Y., 1937), p. 11.

¹⁴ Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 58-59.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 232-33.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 33.

tion to it hereafter than we have been doing." ¹⁷ About this time, as a member of Congress, he supported the Wilmot Proviso forbidding slavery in any territory acquired as a result of the war with Mexico. And in 1849 he introduced a bill in the House of Representatives providing for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia with financial compensation for the owners. But this was to go into effect only if the slaveowners consented. Throughout these years he was of the opinion that slavery was on its last legs and would soon draw its final breath. He was certain that "everybody was against it and that it was in the course of ultimate extinction." ¹⁸

Then in 1854 Lincoln's beautiful dream came to an end. Early in that eventful year Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act which provided for the formation of two territories, Kansas and Nebraska, and allowed for the doctrine of popular sovereignty, that is, that the people of the territories be allowed to decide for themselves whether they wanted slavery or not. Thus the measure repealed the Missouri Compromise line of 1820 according to which all the land in the Louisiana Territory, north of the 36° and 30' line, was to be free from slavery. Now the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened the way for the recognition of the principle that slavery could spread throughout the vast, unsettled territories of the United States.

It was obviously impossible for Lincoln to remain "quiet" any longer. "We know the opening of new territories to slavery," he said in a speech at Peoria, Illinois, in October, 1854, the first great speech of his career, "tends to the perpetuation of the institution, and so does keep men in slavery who would otherwise be free. This result we do not feel like favoring, and we are under no legal obligation to suppress our feelings in this respect." ¹⁹ And from October, 1854, until the outbreak of the Civil War Lincoln was steadfast in his

¹⁷ Frederick W. Seward, *Seward at Washington as Senator and Secretary of State* (N. Y., 1891), Vol. II, p. 80.

¹⁸ Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 33.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 223.

opposition to any further territorial concessions to the slave power and refused to suppress his feelings "in this respect." When conservatives in the Republican Party, which was formed shortly after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, expressed a desire to abandon opposition to the expansion of slavery in the territories in order to win new recruits, Lincoln sharply took issue with them, pointing out that the main object of the new party was "*the preventing the spread and nationalization of slavery.*" ²⁰

The nomination of Lincoln in 1860 as the Republican standard bearer, it has often been asserted, was merely the result of chance, plus vote-swapping, logrolling and wire-pulling. While some of this may be true, it ignores the fact that Lincoln already possessed a mass following among the small farmers and workingmen who comprised the bulk of the Republican Party. Swedish workers in the Middle West spoke affectionately of "*arbetaresonen Lincoln*" (Lincoln, the son of the workingman), and German workers in Illinois showed their devotion to Lincoln by organizing, early in 1860, Lincoln-for-President clubs. ²¹ In April, 1860, moreover, the Baltimore *Turnzeitung*, central organ of the German Turnvereins of the United States, in which workingmen predominated, came out for Lincoln for President. "Under a standard-bearer like him," it declared, "the Republican Party will be certain of victory." ²²

The stand taken by the *Turnzeitung* may come as a distinct surprise to those who have been led to believe that Lincoln was a political nonentity in 1860 when the Republican convention met. But in reality he had already won wide popularity among large sections of the plain people. For one thing, Lincoln had endeared himself to the foreign born in America by the strong stand he had taken in opposition to the Know-Nothing movement, that vicious crusade instituted in the

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, 128-29 (emphasis in original).

²¹ Nels Hokanson, *Swedish Immigrants in Lincoln's Time* (N. Y., 1942), p. 54.

²² William Baringer, *Lincoln's Rise to Power* (Boston, 1937), pp. 54, 90.

fifties by chauvinist elements against foreigners, Catholics, and Negroes. In 1854 Lincoln denounced Know Nothingism and refused to endorse fusion between the Know Nothing and Republican parties. "Of their principle," he wrote, "I think little better than I do of those of slavery extensionists. Indeed I do not perceive how any professing to be sensitive to the wrongs of the Negro, can join in a league to degrade a class of white men. I have no objection to 'fusing' with anybody, provided I can fuse on grounds which I think right."²³ Thereafter Lincoln lost no opportunity to blast away at the Know Nothing movement. He spoke frequently of the contributions Germans, Irish, French, and Scandinavians had made to American civilization, and emphasized that the true mark of American democracy was the fact that "men that have come from Europe themselves or whose ancestors have come and settled here" could find themselves "equal in all things in this country." To permit the Know Nothings to triumph would be tantamount to destroying at one blow the finest features of American institutions.²⁴

By his sympathetic understanding of the problems of workmen, Lincoln gained the support and respect of many free laborers in the North. Lincoln's relations with the working class have been the subject of heated dispute. Pseudo-revolutionary writers have wasted many pages in an effort to prove that Lincoln was not a socialist. Spokesmen for the National Association of Manufacturers have depicted Lincoln as an enemy of the labor movement and a staunch defender of capital against labor.²⁵

Lincoln himself belonged to the petty-bourgeois, farmer, and small storekeeper class, and his approach to the working

²³ Philip Van Doren Stern, *Life and Writings of Abraham Lincoln* (N. Y., 1949), pp. 388-89.

²⁴ Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 19-32.

²⁵ For interesting discussions of Lincoln's attitude towards labor, see Herman Schlichter, *Lincoln, Labor and Slavery* (N. Y., 1913); W. J. Ghent, "Lincoln and Labor," *The Independent* (February 11, 1909, pp. 301-05), and A. C. Cole, *Lincoln's "House Divided" Speech, did it reflect a doctrine of class struggle?* (Chicago, 1923).

class frequently reflected his origin. While, as he himself admitted on more than one occasion, he did not understand all the problems of the industrial working class, the fact remains that among political figures of his day he was still the most outspoken champion of the laboring man and of the right of workers to organize and to strike. Certainly no other national political leader would have dared to say, as did Lincoln in his New Haven speech of March 6, 1860, in reference to the great shoemakers' strike then in progress: "I am glad to see that a system of labor prevails in New England under which laborers can strike when they want to, where they are not obliged to labor whether you pay them or not. I like the system which lets a man quit when he wants to, and wish it might prevail everywhere. One of the reasons why I am opposed to slavery is just here."

Lincoln's stand on slavery was one that was understood and appreciated by the workmen. As he pointed out in March, 1860: "If you give up your convictions and call slavery right . . . you let slavery in upon you. Instead of white laborers who can strike, you'll soon have black laborers who can't."

Considerable emphasis has usually been placed upon the fact that Lincoln was a minority President, since he received only 40 per cent of the vote—1,866,000 votes to the 2,815,000 cast for Douglas, Breckinridge, and Bell. But the important fact is that the anti-secession forces in the election were in the majority. Lincoln's votes, plus that of Stephen A. Douglas, candidate of the pro-Union Democrats, and of John C. Bell, candidate of the Constitutional Union Party, came to 82 per cent of the total. Also significant is the fact that in fourteen slave states, Douglas, Bell, and Lincoln received 124,000 more votes than Breckinridge, the standard bearer of the secessionist elements. The oft-repeated story that the drive for secession had vast popular support in the South is definitely in need of revision. Finally, it is important to remember that Lincoln's vote was distributed in states that had many electoral votes owing to the fact that they were heavily populated. Hence, as Lincoln's secretaries, Nicolay and Hay, have pointed out: "If

all the votes given to all the opposing candidates had been concentrated and cast for a "fusion ticket." Lincoln would still have received but a fewer, or 100 electoral votes—a majority of 55 in the entire electoral college.²⁵

The election of 1860 made it quite clear that the majority of the people in the North and West had determined to combat any further territorial encroachment of the slave power. The people had been slow to reach this decision, but the events of the past decade, especially after 1854, had convinced them that the slaveholders had launched a *systematic* conspiracy to spread slavery into the territories and eventually to establish it legally in the free states as well.²⁶ Lincoln shared this belief, and it was this more than anything else which had swept him into the ranks of the popular forces opposing the further expansion of slavery. It was typical of Lincoln that though he reached this decision hesitantly, he saw it through resolutely without the slightest wavering. Never too far ahead of the people, he had been able to voice their sentiments on the leading issue of the day as well as to express their dislike for any policy which called for surrendering opposition to the extension of slavery.

After his election, when conservative Republicans were ready to accept compromise plans which provided for the spread of slavery into the great Southwest in the hope of bringing the seceded states back into the Union, Lincoln wrote: "There is one point... I can never surrender—that which was the main issue of the Presidential canvass and decided at the late election, concerning the extension of slavery in the territories."²⁸ And on the eve of his inauguration, when

²⁵ Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History* (N. Y., 1890), Vol. II, p. 295.

²⁷ The Supreme Court decision in the Dred Scott case in 1857 did much to popularize this conviction. The Court, which consisted of a majority of Southerners, ruled that the slaveholders could take their chattels to any territory of the United States and hold them there in bondage no matter what Congress or the territorial legislature said to the contrary.

²⁸ Quoted by Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, Vol. I, p. 118.

a delegation of New York businessmen urged him to "yield to the just demands of the South" and thereby prevent the grass from growing "in the streets of our commercial cities," Lincoln replied:

"I shall take an oath that I will to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States... The Constitution will not be preserved and defended until it is enforced and obeyed in every part of every one of the United States. It must be so respected, obeyed, enforced, and defended, let the grass grow where it may."²⁹

The characteristic which Lincoln exhibited during the years prior to the outbreak of the Civil War he was to display during the war itself. Once again he came to vital decisions hesitantly, but again he carried through these decisions resolutely once he had made up his mind to follow the proper course of action. Nothing reveals this more clearly than does his attitude towards the emancipation of the Negro slaves.

There is no doubt that the slogan, "Save the Union," which Lincoln advanced at the outbreak of the Civil War was correct for the time. Only a small fraction of the northern people who took to arms the moment Fort Sumter was attacked joined the Union forces with any aim in mind other than that of saving the nation. Some Abolitionists and politically advanced German-American Communists like Joseph Weydemeyer entered the struggle with a consciousness of the need to abolish Negro slavery as well as to save the Union and saw clearly from the outset that the two issues were intertwined. But it is doubtful whether many who joined the colors were ready at this time to accept the logic of Abolitionist arguments. They shared with Lincoln the belief that the only issue at stake in the war was "whether in a free government the minority have the right to break it up whenever they choose."³⁰

²⁹ Quoted by P. S. Foner, *Business and Slavery* (N. C., 1941), pp. 272-73.

³⁰ Carl Sandburg, *Storm Over the Land: A Profile of the Civil War* (N. Y., 1942), p. 43.

But events themselves and the logic of waging a people's war successfully quickly taught the people that the abolition of slavery was essential to the preservation of the Union. Had not the slaveowners themselves boasted that their "peculiar institution" would win the war for them? Said their paper, the *Savannah Republican*:

"They [the Northern people] forget the peculiar character of our institutions, the permanency of our industrial system, the fact that the labor of the South is not as elsewhere, the fighting element of the State. When wars occur in Europe or at the North, they take the laboring man from the plow, the workshop and factory to fight for them. Production to the extent of the force required, must accordingly cease. In the Southern, and especially in the cotton-growing states, the case is entirely different. A wholly different system of labor prevails. Our cotton-fields are tilled by slaves, and Georgia alone might send 20,000 troops to the field without diminishing the production of her staple to the amount of a hundred bales."¹¹

But the slaveowners overlooked the fact that a million or more able-bodied slaves awaited but a word to ally themselves with the North bodily as they already were in mind. And as the months passed, more and more people in the North came to agree with Thaddeus Stevens that "those who now furnish the means of war, but who are the natural enemies of slaveholders must be made our allies."¹² Hence they joined in calling for the freedom of the slaves as a measure to win the war and preserve the Union. When, in August, 1861, General John C. Frémont issued an order which freed the slaves of all rebels in Missouri, the people of the North hailed this action. "The popular outburst endorsing this order was tremendous

¹¹ *Savannah Republican*, reprinted in *Boston Daily Courier*, Feb. 21, 1861.

¹² Thomas F. Woodley, *Thaddeus Stevens* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1934), pp. 364-65, also Elizabeth Lawson, *Thaddeus Stevens* (N. Y., 1942), pp. 16-17.

and spontaneous."¹³ And the chorus of disapproval which arose from the people when Lincoln revoked the order was also tremendous. Anti-slavery men reported that in many cities where a few months before only a handful of Abolitionists could be found among the workingmen, there were now hundreds who understood the need "for prosecuting the war till slavery is wiped out."¹⁴

Yet Lincoln still hesitated and delayed despite his own hatred of slavery. Fear of alienating the conservative commercial and banking interests and of antagonizing the loyal slaveholders of the border states, plus his own legalistic training and middle class background, were responsible for these hesitations. Commenting upon the slaveholders' influence, Karl Marx, who with his colleague Frederick Engels had watched the course of the struggle in America from the beginning, wrote:

"...Tender regard for the interests, prejudices and sensibilities of these ambiguous allies has smitten the Union Government with incurable weakness since the beginning of the war...and forced it to spare the foe's most vulnerable spot, the root of the evil—slavery itself."¹⁵

The border states were important to the cause of the Union; before the war they had supplied the South with most of the necessities of life. Lincoln had good cause to concern himself with keeping these states loyal to the Union. But he failed to see that the slaveowners in the border states did not represent the mass of the people any more than they did in the South itself. Hence, rather than ally himself with the anti-slavery, popular forces in these states (the Germans were an important element) he clung to the policy of dealing only with the loyal slaveowners, quite a few of whom merely wore the mask of loyalty.

¹³ T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and the Radicals* (Wisc., 1941), p. 41.

¹⁴ See *The Liberator*, Vol. XXXI, pp. 15, 122, 130, 185; *Philadelphia Free*, July 30, 1862.

¹⁵ Marx and Engels, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-82.

In like manner Lincoln would not part with the ultra-reactionary, anti-Abolitionist Union Commander-in-Chief General George B. McClellan, despite popular outbursts at the general's super-dilatory tactics. Lincoln made every possible effort to prod McClellan into action and sought constantly to remind him that he invariably overestimated the size and strength of enemy forces and underestimated his own. But though McClellan ignored the President, Lincoln did nothing. Nor did he interfere when McClellan and other Union generals of the same stripe warned the slaves against any attempt to free themselves, and forcibly returned to bondage Negroes who came over to the Union lines. The people raged when McClellan assured the slaveowners that his army did not intend to interfere in any way with their chattels and would "on the contrary, with an iron hand, crush any attempt at insurrection on their part."²⁶

Still Lincoln said nothing. He still hoped that somehow, in some way, he might be able to convince the South to accept the North's terms, that perhaps the slaveholders could be won over to support compensated emancipation of their slaves.

But events themselves, and the logic which had brought so many people in the North to realize the necessity of emancipation and of ridding the army of all who refused to wage offensive warfare, were now to have their effect on Lincoln. Even T. Harry Williams, in his book, *Lincoln and the Radicals*, a study which bemoans the emancipation of the slaves, concedes this very point. "Against Lincoln and his conservative program," he writes, "the Jacobins [the Radical Republicans] waged a winning battle. Both logic and time aided their cause. For Lincoln proposed the impossible—to conduct the war for the preservation of the *status quo* which had produced the war."²⁷

"I claim not to have controlled events," Lincoln wrote in 1864, "but confess plainly that events have controlled me."²⁸

²⁶ Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

²⁸ Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, Vol. X, pp. 65-69.

It is the measure of Lincoln's historical greatness that he came to realize the impossibility of his own program. Once convinced, he moved decisively. The year 1862 was a year of action. In February, the government prosecuted and hanged Nathaniel Gordon, a slave trader, the first slave trader to be executed, even though the laws of the country had long declared the foreign slave trade to be piracy which was a capital offense. In March, Lincoln approved an Act of Congress prohibiting officers of the army from using the military forces to return runaway slaves. In April, the United States signed a treaty with England providing for mutual right of search to suppress the slave trade. That very same month, the government freed the slaves in the District of Columbia with compensation for their owners. In June, the United States recognized the Negro republics of Haiti and Liberia, an act which the Abolitionists had been demanding for decades but which the slavocracy had succeeded in blocking. In July, after demanding several revisions in the measure, Lincoln signed the Confiscation Act which declared free the slaves of all persons who in any way aided or supported the rebellion.

Then in September, 1862, to climax the swift succession of revolutionary measures, Lincoln issued a preliminary Proclamation of Emancipation to take effect January, 1863. It has been the practice of the debunking school of historians and biographers to dismiss this Proclamation with the comment that it was nothing but an empty gesture, since the Union Army was not yet in the position to extend freedom to the majority of the slaves in the Confederacy. But as Karl Marx pointed out in a letter to his friend, Frederick Engels, dated October 29, 1862: "The fury with which the Southerners have received Lincoln's Acts proves their importance."²⁹

Certainly, Northern conservatives did not underestimate the historic significance of Lincoln's Proclamation. On the contrary, they sought frantically to dissuade him from carrying out his plan. McClellan, who had already warned Lincoln

²⁹ Marx and Engels, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

that the Administration must under no circumstances abandon its conservative policies, issued a counter-proclamation to the army denouncing any and all proposals to free the slaves. Lincoln replied by dismissing McClellan from the army and announced his intention of carrying through his Proclamation of Emancipation. The Abolitionist Senator Charles Sumner, after a visit to Lincoln on December 28, 1862, wrote: "You will be glad to know that the President is firm. He says that he would not stop the Proclamation if he could, and he could not if he would."⁴¹

The President remained firm. Having taken the decisive step, "absolutely essential," to use his own words, "for the preservation of the Union," he refused to budge an inch. "While I am in my present position," he declared, "I shall not attempt to retract or modify the emancipation proclamation, nor shall I return to slavery any person who is free by the terms of that proclamation or by any of the acts of Congress."⁴²

Lincoln's desire to consolidate working-class and middle-class sentiment in Europe was an important factor in his decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. Owing to the Federal blockade of the South, thousands of unemployed textile workers in England starved throughout our Civil War. But because they believed in democracy and hated slavery and because they regarded the Civil War in America as their war too, the English working classes endured their misery and suffering without a murmur. And whenever their reactionary government took steps to involve England on the side of the Confederacy, they spoke out in opposition at mass meetings organized by trade unions, by liberals like John Bright, and prominent communists like Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Henry Adams, son of the American ambassador to England,

⁴⁰ George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story* (N. Y., 1887), pp. 487-88.

⁴¹ Edward L. Pierce, *Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner* (Boston, 1893), Vol. IV, p. 113.

⁴² Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, Vol. X, p. 310.

spoke of Marx's "guiding hand" in the organization of these protest meetings.⁴³

The British ruling class and the Confederate agents in England sought frantically to weaken the devotion of the workers to the Union and obtain support for intervention on the side of the South. To defend slavery was, of course, impossible. Nor was there any use in arguing that intervention, by breaking the blockade, would restore prosperity to the English working class. The answer of the workers was clear:

"No matter what the suffering we may endure, no matter what the sacrifices we may have to undergo, we will not allow our Government to depart from the strict principle of neutrality on behalf of the slaveholding Confederacy."⁴⁴

But one argument did have influence and did succeed in confusing many workers. Why suffer, said English papers friendly to the South, why endure misery and hardships for a cause the North does not even champion? The North was not fighting to free the slaves. The struggle in America was simply a battle between Republicans and Democrats over protective tariffs and banking systems. Why then starve and sacrifice?

Carl Schurz, the German-American Abolitionist who was serving as American Ambassador to Spain, was genuinely alarmed at the failure of the Lincoln administration to make the war clearly one for the abolition of slavery. In a report to Secretary of State Seward in 1861, Schurz pointed out with clarity and vigor the need for the adoption of this policy in order to insure good will abroad. He emphasized that his observations in England, France, and Spain had convinced him that there was considerable surprise and disappointment among the masses when the Federal Government had "denied that abolition of slavery was one of the objects of the war." He went on: "The agents of the South... are availing them-

⁴³ Ephraim D. Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War* (New York, 1925), Vol. II, p. 292 n.

⁴⁴ H. Parkes, "English Workingmen and the American Civil War," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. XXXIX, p. 439. See also Appendix III for reasons why British workers aided the Union cause.

selves of this state of things with adroitness. While their agents carefully conceal from the eyes of the Europeans their only weak point, their attachment to slavery, ought we not to show them in hiding with equal care our only strong point, our opposition to slavery? While they, well knowing how repugnant slavery is to the European way of feeling, do all to make Europeans forget that they fight for it, ought we who are equally well acquainted with European sentiments, to abstain from making Europeans remember what we fight for? It is my profound conviction that as soon as the war becomes distinctly one for and against slavery, public opinion will be so strongly, so overwhelmingly in our favor, that in spite of commercial interests, or secret spies, no European government will dare to place itself by declaration or act, upon the side of a universally condemned institution."⁴⁵

Lincoln was well aware of the importance of meeting and defeating the Confederate propaganda in Europe and of strengthening the mass sentiment for the Union in foreign countries. To Carl Schurz he said: "I cannot imagine that any European power would dare to recognize the Confederacy. It became clear that the Confederacy stands for slavery and the Union for freedom."⁴⁶

Events proved the correctness of this conviction.

The British working class was deeply stirred when it learned that Lincoln had announced his determination to free the slaves in January, 1863. At the same time, however, it feared that reactionary forces might influence Lincoln at the last moment to draw back. Led by Karl Marx and prominent trade union leaders, the workingmen of England held meetings and drew up addresses urging Lincoln to stand fast and continue until slavery was abolished.

The most famous address sent to President Lincoln was that adopted by the workingmen of Manchester at a meeting at the Free Trade Hall, December 31, 1862. It was immediately

⁴⁵ Carl Schurz, *The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz* (N. Y., 1909), Vol. II, pp. 285-86.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 309-10.

sent to Charles Francis Adams, the American Ambassador, who forwarded it to Secretary of State Seward in Washington. Together with the address Adams sent a brief letter in which he asserted that the document was "a most remarkable indication of the state of popular sentiment in Great Britain," and urged that it be "duly followed up."

The address itself assured President Lincoln of the friendly feelings of the English workingmen toward the government of the United States. "One thing alone," it declared, "has, in the past, lessened our sympathy with your country and our confidence in it, we mean the ascendancy of politicians who not merely maintained Negro slavery, but desired to extend and root it more deeply. Since we have discerned, however, that the victory of the free North in the war which so sorely distressed us as well as afflicted you, will shake off the fetters of the slave, you have attracted our warm and earnest sympathy."

The address then went on to congratulate Lincoln, Congress and the American people for the many decisive steps already taken "towards practically exemplifying your belief in the words of your great founders: 'All men are created free and equal.'" And it urged Lincoln to continue "on this humane and righteous course" until "a complete uprooting of Slavery" was achieved:

"We are certain that such a glorious consummation will cement Great Britain and the United States in close and enduring regards. Our interests, moreover, are identified with yours. We are truly one people, though locally separate. And if you have any ill wishers here, be assured that they are chiefly those who oppose liberty at home, and that they will be powerless to stir up quarrels between us, from the very day in which your country becomes undeniably and without exception, the home of the free."⁴⁷

Lincoln took an unprecedented step after receiving this address. "It was not the custom," writes Carl Sandburg, "for the ruling heads of nations to address letters to 'Workingmen

⁴⁷ For complete text of address, see Schlüter, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-64.

in other countries." ⁴⁸ But Lincoln did. He sent two public letters, one addressed "To the Workingmen of Manchester," the other "To the Workingmen of London," in which he paid tribute to the working classes of Europe, expressed the gratitude of the American people for their support, and declared that their action in support of the American Union despite their "severe trials" was "an instance of sublime Christian heroism which has not been surpassed in any age or in any country." ⁴⁹

The Emancipation Proclamation was received with joy by the people of Europe. Henry Adams sent a jubilant dispatch to his brother. "The Emancipation Proclamation," he wrote, "has done more for us here than all our former victories and all our diplomacy. It is creating an almost convulsive reaction in our favor all over this country. . . . Public opinion is very deeply stirred here, and finds expression in meetings, addresses to President Lincoln, deputations to us, standing committees to agitate the subject and to effect opinion, and all the other symptoms of a great popular movement peculiarly unpleasant to the upper classes here because it rests on the spontaneous action of the lower classes. . . . We are much encouraged and in high spirits." ⁵⁰

When Karl Marx received news of the dismissal of McClellan and of the Emancipation Proclamation, he quoted with approval the following estimate of Lincoln made by the *London Morning Star*: "He [Lincoln] has by successive exhibitions of firmness, taught the world to know him as a slow but solid man who advances with excessive caution, but does not go back. Each step of his administrative career has been in the right direction and has been stoutly maintained. Starting from the resolution to exclude slavery from the territories he has come within sight of the ulterior result of all anti-slavery movements—its extirpation from the whole soil of the

⁴⁸ Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, Vol. II, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁹ Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 196-97.

⁵⁰ Worthington C. Ford, ed., *A Cycle of Adams Letters, 1861-1865* (Boston, 1920), Vol. I, p. 243.

Union—and has already reached the high vantage ground at which the Union ceased to be responsible for the enslavement of a single human being." ⁵¹

Abraham Lincoln moved in the right direction throughout his life because he was close to the people and learned and drew strength from them. Well-housed and well-fed respectability sneered when they heard that the President of the United States had thrown open the White House to delegations of Negroes, workers, farmers, and soldiers, to the latter of whom he was known as "Father Abraham." ⁵² But it was in these discussions with delegations of the common people that Lincoln learned what the people were thinking. And none of these delegations left him without taking with them a deep impression of a sincere and honest man who spoke their language and understood their problems. Typical is the following message from a member of a delegation from the Machinists and Blacksmiths Union after a visit to President Lincoln:

"It is but faint praise to say that the President deserves the hearty thanks of all the workingmen throughout the country for the kind and courteous manner in which he treated their humble representatives. If any man should again say that combinations [unions] of workingmen are not good, let them point to the Chief Magistrate kindly and frankly treating a workingman's committee. I will never dress to see Old Abe, working clothes will do." ⁵³

⁵¹ Quoted by Marx and Engels, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-14. The editorial appeared in the *Morning Star* of Nov. 22, 1862.

⁵² "The soldiers," Carl Schurz tells us, "admired their great generals . . . but their President, their good 'Father Abraham,' they loved. Him they carried in their hearts as their personal friend and the friend of their homes and families." (Carl Schurz, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 112.) For accounts of interviews with Lincoln by representatives of the Negro and Jewish peoples, see reports by the great Negro Abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, and by Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, in Appendices I and II, pages 89-92 of this book.

⁵³ *Fincher's Trades' Review*, Feb. 16, 1864.

Lincoln always spoke of himself as the instrument of the people, the tribune of the masses. Because of that he was also their spokesman, expressing in simple and noble words their hopes and highest aspirations. The letters and speeches of Abraham Lincoln included in this booklet have been arranged in four sections, Democracy, Slavery, The Civil War, and Labor. Within each section the words of Lincoln are preceded by headings furnished by the editor. All footnotes to the Lincoln text have been supplied by the editor.

Many of Lincoln's utterances in the following pages are as valid today as when he expressed them three-quarters of a century ago. They are words that the people everywhere recognize as their own, words that express the ideals for which free men and women were willing to give their lives in 1861 and for which they are giving their lives today. To read these words is to understand why he has become the symbol of democracy the world over, and why wherever free men and women are fighting today Abraham Lincoln walks again.

I. DEMOCRACY

THE RIGHT OF SELF-GOVERNMENT

I trust I understand and truly estimate the right of self-government. My faith in the proposition that each man should do precisely as he pleases with all which is exclusively his own lies at the foundation of the sense of justice there is in me. I extend the principle to communities of men as well as to individuals. I so extend it because it is politically wise, as well as naturally just: politically wise in saving us from broils about matters which do not concern us. Here, or at Washington, I would not trouble myself with the oyster laws of Virginia, or the cranberry laws of Indiana. The doctrine of self-government is right—absolutely and eternally right—but it has no just application as here attempted. Or perhaps I should rather say that whether it has such application depends upon whether a Negro is not or is a man. If he is not a man, in that case he who is a man may as a matter of self-government do just what he pleases with him.

But if the Negro is a man, is it not to that extent a total destruction of self-government to say that he too shall not govern himself? When the white man governs himself, that is self-government; but when he governs himself and also governs another man, that is more than self-government—that is despotism. If the Negro is a man, why then my ancient faith teaches me that "all men are created equal," and that there can be no moral right in connection with one man's making a slave of another.

Judge Douglas frequently, with bitter irony and sarcasm, paraphrases our argument by saying: "The white people of

Nebraska are good enough to govern themselves, but they are not good enough to govern a few miserable Negroes!"

Well! I doubt not that the people of Nebraska are and will continue to be as good as the average of people elsewhere. I do not say the contrary. What I do say is that no man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent. I say this is the leading principle, the sheet-anchor of American republicanism. Our Declaration of Independence says:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, DERIVING THEIR JUST POWERS FROM THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED.

I have quoted so much at this time merely to show that, according to our ancient faith, the just powers of governments are derived from the consent of the governed. Now the relation of master and slave is *pro tanto* a total violation of this principle. The master not only governs the slave without his consent, but he governs him by a set of rules altogether different from those which he prescribes for himself. Allow all the governed an equal voice in the government, and that, and that only, is self-government.

FROM SPEECH AT PEORIA, ILLINOIS
IN REPLY TO STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS, OCT. 16, 1854¹

THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

Whereas, in the opinion of this meeting, the arrival of Kossuth in our country,* in connection with the recent events

* Louis Kossuth was the leader of the Hungarian revolution of 1848. After the revolution was crushed, Kossuth came to America as a guest of the nation in 1851. He received an overwhelming reception all over the country. The above resolutions written by Lincoln and adopted at a meeting in Springfield, Ill., in 1852 are indicative of the interest of the

in Hungary, and with the appeal he is now making in behalf of his country, presents an occasion upon which we, the American people, cannot remain silent, without justifying an interference against our continued devotion to the principles of our free institutions, therefore,

Resolved: 1. That it is the right of any people, sufficiently numerous for national independence, to throw off, to revolutionize, their existing form of government, and to establish such other in its stead as they may choose.

2. That it is the duty of our government to neither foment, nor assist, such revolutions in other governments.

3. That, as we may not legally or warrantably interfere abroad, to aid, so no other government may interfere aboard, to suppress such revolutions; and that we should at once, announce to the world, our determination to insist upon this mutuality of non-intervention, as a sacred principle of the international law.

4. That the late interference of Russia in the Hungarian struggle was, in our opinion, such illegal and unwarrantable interference.

5. That to have resisted Russia in that case, or to resist any power in a like case, would be no violation of our own cherished principles of non-intervention, but, on the contrary, would be ever meritorious, in us, or any independent nation.

6. That whether we will, in fact, interfere in such case, is purely a question of policy, to be decided when the exigencies arise.

7. That we recognize in governor Kossuth of Hungary the most worthy and distinguished representative of the cause of civil and religious liberty on the continent of Europe. A cause for which he and his nation struggled until they were overwhelmed by the armed intervention of a foreign despot, in violation of the more sacred principles of the laws of nature and of nations—principles held dear by the friends of freedom

American people in the revolutions of 1848 in Ireland, Germany, France, and Hungary. In these resolutions Lincoln reaffirmed his belief in the right of revolution.

everywhere, and more especially by the people of these United States.

8. That the sympathies of this country, and the benefits of its position, should be exerted in favor of the people of every nation struggling to be free; and whilst we meet to do honor to Kossuth and Hungary, we should not fail to pour out the tribute of our praise and approbation to the patriotic efforts of the Irish, the Germans and the French, who have unsuccessfully fought to establish in their several governments the supremacy of the people.

9. That there is nothing in the past history of the British government, or in its present expressed policy, to encourage the belief that she will aid, in any manner, in the delivery of continental Europe from the rope of despotism; and that the treatment of Ireland, of O'Brien, Mitchell, and other working patriots, forces the conclusion that she will join her efforts to the despots of Europe in suppressing every effort of the people to establish free governments, based upon the principles of true religious and civil liberty.

RESOLUTIONS IN BEHALF OF HUNGARIAN FREEDOM

JAN. 9, 1851

SUFFRAGE

I go for all sharing the privileges of the government who assist in bearing its burdens. Consequently, I go for admitting all whites to the right of suffrage who pay taxes or bear arms (by no means excluding females).

FROM LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE *Sangamon Journal*

JUNE 13, 1850

In what I have done I cannot claim to have acted from any peculiar consideration of the colored people as a separate and distinct class in the community, but from the simple conviction that all the individuals of that class are members of the community, and, in virtue of their manhood, entitled to every original right enjoyed by any other member. We feel, therefore, that all legal distinction between individuals of the same community, founded in any such circumstances as color

origin, and the like, are hostile to the genius of our institutions, and incompatible with the true history of American liberty. Slavery and oppression must cease, or American liberty must perish.

I embrace, with pleasure, this opportunity of declaring my disapprobation of that clause of the Constitution which denies to a portion of the colored people the right of suffrage.

True Democracy makes no inquiry about the color of the skin, or place of nativity, or any other similar circumstances of condition. I regard, therefore, the exclusion of the colored people as a body from the elective franchise as incompatible with true Democratic principles.

FROM SPEECH AT CINCINNATI TO FREE NEGROES, MAY 6, 1842 *

EDUCATION FOR THE PEOPLE

Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in. That every man may receive at least a moderate education, and thereby be enabled to read the histories of his own and other countries, by which he may duly appreciate the value of our free institutions, appears to be an object of vital importance, even on this account alone, to say nothing of the advantages and satisfaction to be derived from all being able to read the Scriptures, and other works both of a religious and moral nature, for themselves.

For my part, I desire to see the time when education—and by its means, morality, sobriety, enterprise, and industry—shall become much more general than at present, and should be enabled to have it in my power to contribute something to the advancement of any measure which might have a tendency to accelerate that happy period.

FROM ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF SANGAMON COUNTY,*

MAR. 9, 1832 *

* This was Lincoln's first public address. He was only twenty-three years old at the time.

ON JEFFERSONIAN PRINCIPLES

But, soberly, it is now no child's play to save the principles of Jefferson from total overthrow in this nation. One would state with great confidence that he could convince any child that the simpler propositions of Euclid are true, but nevertheless he would fail, utterly, with one who should know the definitions and axioms. The principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of free society. And yet they are denied and evaded, with no small show of success. One dashing calls them "glittering generalities." Another bluntly calls them "self-evident lies." And others insidiously argue that they apply to "superior races." These expressions, differing in form, are identical in object and effect—the supplanting [of] the principles of free government, and restoring those of classification, caste, and legitimacy. They would delight a convocation of crowned heads plotting against the people. They are the vanguard, the miners and sappers of returning despotism. We must repulse them, or they will subjugate us. This is a world of compensation; and he who would be no slave must consent to have no slave. Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and, under a just God, cannot long retain it. All honor to Jefferson—to the man, who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so to embalm it there that today and in all coming days it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of reappearing tyranny and oppression.

FROM LETTER TO H. L. PIERCE AND OTHERS, APR. 6, 1844

DEFINING THE WORD LIBERTY

The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. With some the word

liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labor. Here are two, not only different, but incompatible things, called by the same name—liberty. And it follows that each of the things is, by its respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names—liberty and tyranny.

The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as his liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act, as the destroyer of liberty, especially as the sheep was a black one. Plainly, the sheep and the wolf are not agreed upon a definition of the word liberty; and precisely the same difference prevails today among human creatures, even in the North, and all professing to love liberty. Hence we behold the process by which thousands are daily passing from under the yoke of bondage hailed by some as the advance of liberty, and bewailed by others as the destruction of all liberty.

FROM ADDRESS AT SANITARY FAIR IN BALTIMORE, APR. 18, 1864

ON LYNCH LAW

When men take it in their heads today to hang gamblers or burn murderers, they should recollect that in the confusion usually attending such transactions they will be as likely to hang or burn some one who is neither a gambler nor a murderer, as one who is, and that, acting upon the example they see, the mob of tomorrow may, and probably will, hang or burn some of them by the very same mistake. And not only so; the innocent, those who have ever set their faces against violations of law in every shape, alike with the guilty fall victims to the ravages of mob law; and thus it goes up, step by step, till the walls erected for the defense of the persons and property of individuals are trodden down and disregarded. But all this, even, is not the full extent of the evil. By such examples, by instances of the perpetrators of such acts going unpunished,

the lawless in spirit are encouraged to become lawless in practice; and having been used to no restraint but dread of punishment, they thus become absolutely unrestrained. Having ever regarded government as their deadliest bane, they make a jubilee of the suspension of its operations, and pray for nothing so much as its total annihilation. While, on the other hand, good men, men who love tranquillity, who desire to abide by the laws and enjoy their benefits, who would gladly spill their blood in the defense of their country, seeing their property destroyed, their families insulted, and their lives endangered, their persons injured, and seeing nothing in prospect that forebodes a change for the better, become tired of and disgusted with a government that offers them no protection, and are not much averse to a change in which they imagine they have nothing to lose. Thus, then, by the operation of this mobocratic spirit which all must admit is now abroad in the land, the strongest bulwark of any government, and particularly of those constituted like ours, may effectually be broken down and destroyed—I mean the attachment of the people. Whenever this effect shall be produced among us; whenever the vicious portion of population shall be permitted to gather in bands of hundreds and thousands, and burn churches, ravage and rob provision-stores, throw printing-presses into rivers, shoot editors,* and hang and burn obnoxious persons at pleasure and with impunity, depend on it, this government cannot last.

FROM ADDRESS BEFORE THE YOUNG MEN'S LYCEUM OF
SPRINGFIELD, JAN. 27, 1838⁹

THE RIGHT OF REVOLUTION

Any people anywhere being inclined and having the power have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government.

* The reference is to the killing of Elijah Lovejoy, the Abolitionist editor, who was shot by a pro-slavery mob in Alton, Illinois. Lincoln later referred to Lovejoy's murder as "the most important single event that ever happened in the new world."

and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most valuable, a most sacred right—a right which we hope and believe is to liberate the world. Nor is this right confined to cases in which the whole people of an existing government may choose to exercise it. Any portion of such people that can may revolutionize and make their own of so much of the territory as they inhabit. More than this, a majority of any portion of such people may revolutionize, putting down a minority, intermingled with or near about them, who may oppose this movement. Such minority was precisely the case of the Tories of our own revolution. It is a quality of revolutions not to go by old lines or old laws; but to break up both, and make new ones.

FROM SPEECH IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON THE MEXICAN WAR, JAN. 12, 1848⁹

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it.*

FROM FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS, MAR. 4, 1861¹⁰

HOMES FOR THE POOR

In regard to the Homestead law, I have to say that, in so far as the government lands can be disposed of, I am in favor of cutting up the wild lands into parcels, so that every poor man can have a home.

FROM ADDRESS TO THE GERMANS OF CINCINNATI, OHIO,
FEB. 12, 1861¹¹

PERSECUTION OF THE FOREIGN BORN

You inquire where I now stand. . . I now do no more than oppose the extension of slavery. I am not a Know-Nothing; * One of the most popular ballads of our day, composed by Earl Robinson, is based on the above statement.

that is certain. How could I be? How can any one who abhors the oppression of Negroes be in favor of degrading classes of white people? Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation we began by declaring that "all men are created equal." We now practically read it "all men are created equal, except Negroes." When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read "all men are created equal, except Negroes and foreigners and Catholics." When it comes to this, I shall prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretense of loving liberty—to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy.

FROM LETTER TO JOSHUA F. SPEED, AUG. 24, 1855¹

I have some little notoriety for commiserating the oppressed Negro; and I should be strangely inconsistent if I could favor any project for curtailing the existing rights of white men, even though born in different lands, and speaking different languages from myself.

FROM LETTER TO DR. THEODORE CANISIUS, MAY 17, 1859²

ON IMMIGRATION

In regard to the Germans and foreigners, I esteem them no better than other people, nor any worse. It is not my nature when I see a people borne down by the weight of their shackles—the oppression of tyranny—to make their life more bitter by heaping upon them greater burdens; but rather would I do all in my power to raise the yoke than to add anything that would tend to crush them.

Inasmuch as our country is extensive and new, and the countries of Europe are densely populated, if there are any abroad who desire to make this the land of their adoption, it is not in my heart to throw aught in their way to prevent them from coming to the United States.

FROM AN ADDRESS TO THE GERMANS AT CINCINNATI, OHIO,
FEB. 12, 1861³

II. SLAVERY

ON SLAVERY AND SLAVERY EXTENSION

If A can prove, however conclusively, that he may of right enslave B, why may not B snatch the same argument and prove equally that he may enslave A? You say A is white and B is black. It is color, then; the lighter having the right to enslave the darker? Take care. By this rule you are to be slave to the first man you meet with a fairer skin than your own. You do not mean color exactly? You mean the whites are intellectually the superiors of the blacks, and therefore have the right to enslave them? Take care again. By this rule you are to be slave to the first man you meet with an intellect superior to your own. But, say you, it is a question of interest, and if you make it your interest you have the right to enslave another. Very well. And if he can make it his interest he has the right to enslave you.

FRAGMENT ON SLAVERY [JULY 1, 1854]¹

The ant who has toiled and dragged a crumb to his nest will furiously defend the fruit of his labor against whatever robber assails him. So plain that the most dumb and stupid slave that ever toiled for a master does consistently know that he is wronged. So plain that no one, high or low, ever does mistake it, except in a plainly selfish way; for although volume upon volume is written to prove slavery a very good thing, we never hear of the man who wishes to take the good of it by being a slave himself.

FROM FRAGMENT ON SLAVERY [JULY 1, 1854]²

In those days * our Declaration of Independence was held sacred by all, and thought to include all; but now, to and to making the bondage of the Negro universal and eternal, it is assailed and sneered at and construed, and hawked at and torn, till, if its framers could rise from their graves, they could not at all recognize it. All the powers of earth seem rapidly combining against him. Mammon is after him, ambition follows, philosophy follows, and the theology of the day is joining the cry. They have him in his prison-house; they have searched his person, and left no prying instrument within him. One after another they have closed the heavy iron doors upon him; and now they have him, as it were, bolted in with a lock of a hundred keys, which can never be unlocked without the concurrence of every key—the keys in the hands of a hundred different men, and they scattered to a hundred different and distant places; and they stand musing as to what invention, in all the dominions of mind and matter, can be produced to make the impossibility of his escape more complete than it is.

FROM SPEECH IN SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS, JUNE 26, 1857¹

Those arguments that are made, that the inferior race are to be treated with as much allowance as they are capable of enjoying; that as much is to be done for them as their condition will allow—what are these arguments? They are the arguments that kings have made for enslaving the people in all ages of the world. You will find that all the arguments in favor of kingcraft were of this class; they always bestrode the necks of the people—not that they wanted to do it, but because the people were better off for being ridden. That is their argument, and this argument of the judge is the same old serpent, that says: "You work and I eat, you toil and I will enjoy the fruits of it." Turn in whatever way you will—whether it come from the mouth of a king, an excuse for enslaving the people of his country, or from the mouth of men of one race as a reason for enslaving the men of another race, it is all the

* The days of the early republic.

same old serpent, and I hold if that course of argumentation that is made for the purpose of convincing the public mind that we should not care about this should be granted, it does not stop with the Negro. I should like to know—taking this old Declaration of Independence, which declares that all men are equal upon principle, and making exceptions to it—where will it stop? If one man says it does not mean a Negro, why not another say it does not mean some other man? If that Declaration is not the truth, let us get the statute-book in which we find it, and tear it out! Who is so bold as to do it? If it is not true, let us tear it out. [*Cries of "No, no!"*] Let us stick to it, then; let us stand firmly by it, then.

FROM SPEECH AT CHICAGO, JULY 10, 1858⁴

Slavery is founded in the selfishness of man's nature—opposition to it in his love of justice. These principles are an eternal antagonism, and when brought into collision so fiercely as slavery extension brings them, shocks and throes and convulsions must ceaselessly follow. Repeal the Missouri Compromise, repeal all compromises, repeal the Declaration of Independence, repeal all past history, you still cannot repeal human nature. It still will be the abundance of man's heart that slavery extension is wrong, and out of the abundance of his heart his mouth will continue to speak. . . .

This declared indifference, but, as I must think, covert real zeal, for the spread of slavery, I cannot but hate. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world; enables the enemies of free institutions with plausibility to taunt us as hypocrites; causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity; and especially because it forces so many good men among ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty, crucifying the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest. . . . Fellow-countrymen, Americans, South as well as North, shall we make no effort to arrest this? Already the liberal party

throughout the world express the apprehension "that the retrograde institution in America is undermining the principles of progress, and fatally violating the noblest policy the world ever saw." This is not the taunt of enemies but the warning of friends. Is it quite safe to disregard it? Is there no danger to liberty itself in discarding the earliest practice and first precept of our ancient faith? In our greedy chase to make profit of the Negro, let us beware lest we "cancel and tear in pieces" even the white man's claim of freedom.

FROM SPEECH AT PEORIA, ILLINOIS, IN REPLY TO
STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS, OCT. 16, 1854

This government is expressly charged with the duty of providing for the general welfare. We believe that the spreading out and perpetuity of the institution of slavery imperil the general welfare. We believe—nay, we know—that that is the only thing that has ever threatened the perpetuity of the Union itself. The only thing which has ever menaced the destruction of the government under which we live, is this very thing. To repress this thing, we think, is providing for the general welfare.

FROM SPEECH AT CINCINNATI, SEPT. 17, 1858

THE REAL ISSUE

The real issue in this controversy—the one pressing upon every mind—is the sentiment on the part of one class that looks upon the institution of slavery as a wrong, and of another class that does not look upon it as a wrong. The sentiment that contemplates the institution of slavery in the country as a wrong is the sentiment of the Republican party. It is the sentiment around which all their actions, all their arguments, circle; from which all their propositions radiate. They look upon it as being a moral, social, and political wrong; and while they contemplate it as such, they nevertheless have due regard for its actual existence among us, and

the difficulties of getting rid of it in any satisfactory way, and to all the constitutional obligations thrown about it. Yet having a due regard for these, they desire a policy in regard to it that looks to its not creating any more danger. They insist that it, as far as may be, be treated as a wrong, and one of the methods of treating it as a wrong is to make provision that it shall grow no larger. They also desire a policy that looks to a peaceful end of slavery some time, as being a wrong. These are the views they entertain in regard to it, as I understand them; and all their sentiments, all their arguments and propositions, are brought within this range. I have said, and I repeat it here, that if there be a man amongst us who does not think that the institution of slavery is wrong in any one of the aspects of which I have spoken, he is misplaced, and ought not to be with us. And if there be a man amongst us who is so impatient of it as a wrong as to disregard its actual presence among us and the difficulty of getting rid of it suddenly in a satisfactory way, and to disregard the constitutional obligations thrown about it, that man is misplaced if he is on our platform. We disclaim sympathy with him in practical action. He is not placed properly with us.

On this subject of treating it as a wrong, and limiting its spread, let me say a word. Has anything ever threatened the existence of this Union save and except this very institution of slavery? What is it that we hold most dear amongst us? Our own liberty and prosperity. What has ever threatened our liberty and prosperity save and except this institution of slavery? If this is true, how do you propose to improve the condition of things by enlarging slavery—by spreading it out and making it bigger? You may have a wen or cancer upon your person, and not be able to cut it out lest you bleed to death, but surely it is no way to cure it, to engraft it and spread it over your whole body. That is no proper way of treating what you regard as a wrong. You see this peaceful way of dealing with it as a wrong—restricting the spread of it, and not allowing it to go into new countries where it has not already existed. That is the peaceful way, the old-fashioned

way, the way in which the fathers themselves set an example.

On the other hand, I have said there is a sentiment which treats it as not being wrong. That is the Democratic sentiment of this day. I do not mean to say that every man who has within that range positively asserts that it is right. That will include all who positively assert that it is *right*, not all who, like Judge Douglas, treat it as indifferent, and do not say it is either right or wrong. These two classes of men are within the general class of those who do not look upon it as a wrong. And if there be among you anybody who asserts that he, as a Democrat, can consider himself "as much opposed to slavery as anybody," I would like to reason with him. He never treats it as a wrong. What other thing that you count as a wrong do you deal with as you deal with that? You say it is wrong, but your leader never does, and you quarrel with anybody who says it is wrong. Although he pretends to say so yourself, you can find no fit place to deal with it as a wrong. You must not say anything about it in the free States, because it is not here. You must not say anything about it in the slave States, because it is there. You must not say anything about it in the pulpit, because that is a religion and has nothing to do with it. You must not say anything about it in politics, because that will disturb the sequence of "my place." There is no place to talk about it as being wrong, although you say yourself it is a wrong.

That is the real issue. That is the issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Judge Douglas and myself shall be silent. It is the eternal struggle between two principles—right and wrong—throughout the world. They are the two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time, and will ever continue to struggle. The issue is the common right of humanity, and the other the right of kings. It is the same principle in whatever shape it develops itself. It is the same spirit that says, "You feed me with work and earn bread, and I'll eat it." No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to

enslave the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle.

REPLY IN THE SEVENTH DEBATE WITH STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS
AT ALTON, ILLINOIS, OCT. 15, 1858¹

THE IRREPRESSIBLE CONFLICT

You could first know where we are, and whither we are going, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it, if we saw far into the future since a policy was initiated on the ground of object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, no agitation has not only not ceased but has constantly increased. In my opinion, it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. "A house divided against itself cannot stand." I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike legal in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South.

FROM SPEECH AT SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS, JUNE 16, 1858²

Is it true that all the difficulty and agitation we have in regard to this institution of slavery springs from office-seeking and the mere ambition of politicians? Is that the truth? How many times have we had danger from this question? Go back to the day of the Missouri Compromise. Go back to the same question, at the bottom of which lay this same institution. Go back to the time of the annexation of Texas. Go back to the troubles that led to the compromise of

1850. You will find that every time, with the single exception of the nullification question, they sprang from an attempt to spread this institution. There never was a party in the history of this country, and there probably never will be, of sufficient strength to disturb the general peace of the country. For themselves may be divided and quarrel on minor questions, yet it extends not beyond the parties themselves. But does this question make a disturbance outside of political circles? Does it not enter into the churches and rend them asunder? What divided the great Methodist Church into two parts, North and South? What has raised this constant dissension in every Presbyterian general assembly that meets? What has disturbed the Unitarian Church in this very city two years ago? What has jarred and shaken the great American Tract Society recently—not yet splitting it, but sure to divide it in the end? Is it not this same mighty, deep-seated power that forever operates on the minds of men, exciting and stirring them up in every avenue of society—in politics, in religion, in literature, in morals, in all the manifold relations of life? Is this the work of politicians? Is that irresistible power, which for fifty years has shaken the government and agitated the people, to be stilled and subdued by pretending that it is an exceedingly simple thing, and we ought not to talk about it? If you will get everybody else to stop talking about it, I assure you I will quit before they have half done so. But where is the philosophy or statesmanship which assumes that you can quiet this disturbing element in our society which has disturbed us for more than half a century, which has been the only serious danger that has threatened our institutions—I say, where is the philosophy or the statesmanship based on the assumption that we are to quit talking about it, and that the public mind is all at once to cease being agitated by it? Yet this is the policy here in the North that Douglas is advocating—that we are to care nothing about it! I ask you if it is not a false philosophy. Is it not a false statesmanship that undertakes to build up a system of policy upon the basis of caring nothing about the very thing that everybody does care the most about—a thing

which all experience has shown we care a very great deal about.
FROM REPLY IN THE SEVENTH DEBATE WITH STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS
AT ALTON, ILLINOIS, OCTOBER 15, 1858 *

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

Even those men who are, in sentiment, opposed to the spread and nationalization of slavery, rests the task of preventing it. The Republican organization is the embodiment of this sentiment. The party is newly formed: and in forming no party ties had to be broken, and the attractions of party pride and influential leaders are wholly wanting. In spite of old differences, prejudices, and animosities, its members were drawn together by a permanent common danger. The [the Republicans] formed and maneuvered in the face of the disciplined enemy, and, in the teeth of all his persistent representations. . . . Of course, they fell far short of gathering it all of their own. And yet, a year ago, they stood up, an army over thirteen hundred thousand strong. That army is now THE BEST HOPE OF THE NATION AND OF THE WORLD. Their work is before them; and FROM WHICH THEY MAY NOT GUILTLESSLY TURN AWAY.

FROM SPEECH ON THE FORMATION OF THE
REPUBLICAN PARTY, 1859 ¹⁰

You will probably adopt resolutions in the nature of a platform; and, as I think, the only danger will be the temptation to lower the Republican standard in order to gather more men. In my judgment such a step would be a serious mistake—it would open a gap through which more would pass out than pass in. And this would be in deference to Douglassism, or to the southern opposition element. Either would surrender the object of the Republican organization—the preventing the spread and nationalization of slavery. This object surrendered, the organization would go to pieces. I do not mean

by this that no Southern man must be placed upon one Republican national ticket for 1860. There are many men in the slave states for any one of whom I would cheerfully vote to be either president or vice-president, provided he would enable me to do so with *safety* to the Republican cause, without lowering the Republican standard. This is the indispensable condition of a union with us. It is idle to think of any other. Any other would be as fruitless to the South as distasteful to the North, the whole ending in common defeat. Let a union be attempted on the basis of ignoring the slave question, and magnifying other questions which the people just now are really caring nothing about, and it will result in gaining no single electoral vote in the *South* and losing every one in the North.

FROM LETTER TO W. M. DELAHAY, MAY 14, 1859.

I have never professed an indifference to the honors of official station; and were I to do so now, I should only make myself ridiculous. Yet I have never failed—do not now fail—to remember that in the republican cause there is a higher aim than that of mere office. I have not allowed myself to forget that the abolition of the slave-trade by Great Britain was agitated a hundred years before it was a final success; that the measure had its open fire-eating opponents; and its religion and good order opponents; that all these opponents got offices, and their adversaries got none. But I have also remembered that though they blazed, like tallow-candles for a century, at last they flickered in the socket, died out, stank in the dark for a brief season, and were remembered no more, even by the smell. School-boys know that Wilberforce, and Granville Sharpe, helped that cause forward; but who can now name a single man who labored to retard it? Remembering these things I can not but regard it as possible that the higher object of this contest may not be completely attained within the term of my natural life. But I can not doubt either that it will come in due time. Even in this view, I am proud, in my passing speck of time, to contribute an humble mite to that

glorious consummation, which my own poor eyes may not last to see. DRAFT OF SPEECH IN LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE, 1858¹²

The Republican party, as I understand its principles and policy, believes that there is great danger of the institution of slavery being spread out and extended, until it is ultimately made alike lawful in all the States of this Union; so believing, to prevent that incidental and ultimate consummation is the original and chief purpose of the Republican organization.

FROM SPEECH AT COLUMBUS, OHIO, SEPT. 16, 1859¹³

APPEASING THE SLAVE POWER

A few words now to Republicans. It is exceedingly desirable that all parts of this great Confederacy shall be at peace, and in harmony one with another. Let us Republicans do our part to have it so. Even though much provoked, let us do nothing through passion and ill temper. Even though the Southern people will not so much as listen to us, let us calmly consider their demands, and yield to them if, in our deliberate view of our duty, we possibly can. Judging by all they say and do, and by the subject and nature of their controversy with us, let us determine, if we can, what will satisfy them.

Will they be satisfied if the Territories be unconditionally surrendered to them? We know they will not. In all their present complaints against us, the Territories are scarcely mentioned. Invasions and insurrections are the rage now. Will it satisfy them if, in the future, we have nothing to do with invasions and insurrections? We know it will not. We so know, because we know we never had anything to do with invasions and insurrections; and yet this total abstaining does not exempt us from the charge and the denunciation.

The question recurs: What will satisfy them? Simply this: We must not only let them alone, but we must somehow convince them that we do let them alone. This, we know by experience, is no easy task. We have been so trying to convince them from the very beginning of our organization, but with

no success. In all our platforms and speeches we have constantly protested our purpose to let them alone; but this has had no tendency to convince them. Alike unavailing to convince them is the fact that they have never detected a man of us in any attempt to disturb them.

These natural and apparently adequate means all failing, what will convince them? This, and this only: cease to call slavery wrong, and join them in calling it right. And this must be done thoroughly—done in acts as well as in words. Silence will not be tolerated—we must place ourselves avowedly with them. Senator Douglas's new sedition law must be enacted and enforced, suppressing all declarations that slavery is wrong, whether made in politics, in presses, in pulpits, or in private. We must arrest and return their fugitive slaves with greedy pleasure. We must pull down our Free-State constitutions. The whole atmosphere must be disinfected from all taint of opposition to slavery, before they will cease to believe that all their troubles proceed from us. . . .

If our sense of duty forbids this, then let us stand by our duty fearlessly and effectively. Let us be diverted by none of those sophistical contrivances wherewith we are so industriously plied and belabored—contrivances such as groping for some middle ground between the right and the wrong; vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead man; such as a policy of "don't care" on a question about which all true men do care; such as Union appeals beseeching true Union men to yield to Disunionists, reversing the divine rule, and calling, not the sinners, but the righteous to repentance; such as invocations to Washington, imploring men to unsay what Washington said and undo what Washington did.

Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the government, nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.

FROM ADDRESS AT COOPER INSTITUTE, FEB. 27, 1860¹⁴

What is our present condition? We have just carried an election on principles fairly stated to the people. Now we are endeavoring to advance the Government shall be broken up unless we surrender to those we have beaten, before we take the offices. As they are either attempting to play upon us or they are waiting in earnest. Either way, if we surrender, it is the end of us and of the Government. They will repeat the experiment upon us *ad libitum*. A year will not pass till we shall have to make Cuba as a condition upon which they will stay in the Union. They now have the Constitution under which we have lived over seventy years, and acts of Congress of their own making, with no prospect of their being changed; and they can never have a more shallow pretext for breaking up the Government, or extorting a compromise, than now. There is in my judgment but one compromise which would really settle the slavery question, and that would be a prohibition against acquiring any more territory.

FROM LETTER TO JAMES T. HALE, JAN. 11, 1861¹⁵

IS THE PEACEFUL EXTINCTION OF SLAVERY POSSIBLE?

Experience has demonstrated, I think, that there is no peaceful extinction of slavery in prospect for us. The signal failure of Henry Clay and other good and great men, in 1849, to effect anything in favor of gradual emancipation in Kentucky, together with a thousand other signs, extinguished that hope utterly. On the question of liberty as a principle, we are not what we have been. When we were the political slaves of King George, and wanted to be free, we called the maxim that "all men are created equal," a self-evident truth, but now when we have grown fat, and have lost all dread of being slaves ourselves, we have become so greedy to be masters that we call the same maxim "a self-evident lie." The Fourth of July has not quite dwindled away; it is still a great day—for burning fire-crackers!!!

That spirit which desired the peaceful extinction of slavery

has itself become extinct with the occasion and the men of the Revolution. Under the impulse of that occasion, nearly half the States adopted systems of emancipation at once, and it is a significant fact that not a single State has done the like since. So far as peaceful voluntary emancipation is concerned, the condition of the Negro slave in America, scarcely less terrible to the contemplation of a free mind, is now as fixed and hopeless of change for the better, as that of the lost souls of the finally impenitent. The Autocrat of all the Russias will resign his crown and proclaim his subjects free republicans sooner than will our American masters voluntarily give up their slaves.

FROM LETTER TO GEORGE ROBERTSON, AUG. 15, 1855¹²

III. THE CIVIL WAR

ON WHAT BASIS MUST THE COUNTRY BE SAVED?

I am filled with deep emotion at finding myself standing in this place [Independence Hall], where were collected together the wisdom, the patriotism, the devotion to principle, from which sprang the institutions under which we live. You have kindly suggested to me that in my hands is the task of restoring peace to our distracted country. I can say in return, sir, that all the political sentiments I entertain have been drawn, so far as I have been able to draw them, from the sentiments which originated in and were given to the world from this hall. I have never had a feeling, politically, that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence. I have often pondered over the dangers which were incurred by the men who assembled here and framed and adopted that Declaration. I have pondered over the toils that were endured by the officers and soldiers of the army who achieved that independence. I have often inquired of myself what great principle or idea it was that kept this Confederacy so long together. It was not the mere matter of separation of the colonies from the motherland, but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the world, for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights would be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance. This is the sentiment embodied in the Declaration of Independence. Now, my friends, can this country be saved on that basis? If it can,

I will consider myself one of the happiest men in the world if I can help to save it. If it cannot be saved upon that principle, it will be truly awful. But if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I was about to say I would rather be assassinated on this spot than surrender it. Now, in my view of the present aspect of affairs, there is no need of bloodshed and war. There is no necessity for it. I am not in favor of such a course; and I may say in advance that there will be no bloodshed unless it is forced upon the government. The government will not use force, unless force is used against it.

My friends, this is wholly an unprepared speech. I did not expect to be called on to say a word when I came here. I supposed I was merely to do something toward raising a flag. I may, therefore, have said something indiscreet. [*Cries of "No, no."*] But I have said nothing but what I am willing to live by, and, if it be the pleasure of Almighty God, to die by.

FROM SPEECH AT INDEPENDENCE HALL, PHILADELPHIA,
FEB. 22, 1861¹

ON SECESSION

I believe you can pretend to find but little, if anything, in my speeches about secession. But my opinion is, that no State can in any way lawfully get out of the Union without the consent of the others; and that it is the duty of the President and other government functionaries to run the machine as it is.

FROM LETTER TO THURLOW WEED, DEC. 17, 1860²

I hold that, in contemplation of universal law and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual. Perpetuity is implied, if not expressed, in the fundamental law of all national governments. It is safe to assert that no government proper ever had a provision in its organic law for its own termination.

Continue to execute all the express provisions of our National Constitution, and the Union will endure forever—

being impossible to destroy it except by some action not provided for in the instrument itself. Again, if the United States be not a government proper, but an association of States in the nature of contract merely, can it, as a contract, be peaceably unmade by less than all the parties who made it? One party to a contract may violate it—break it, so to speak; but does it not require all to lawfully rescind it? . . .

Physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. A husband and wife may be divorced, and go out of the presence and beyond the reach of each other; but the different parts of our country cannot do this. They cannot but remain face to face, and intercourse, either amicable or hostile, must continue between them.

FROM FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS, MAR. 4, 1861³

THIS IS A PEOPLE'S CONTEST

This is essentially a people's contest. On the side of the Union it is a struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men—to lift artificial weights from all shoulders; to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all; to afford all an unfettered start, and a fair chance in the race of life. Yielding to partial and temporary departures, from necessity, this is the leading object of the government for whose existence we contend.

I am most happy to believe that the plain people understand and appreciate this. It is worthy of note that while in this, the government's hour of trial, large numbers of those in the army and navy who have been favored with the offices have resigned and proved false to the hand which had pampered them, not one common soldier or common sailor is known to have deserted his flag.

FROM MESSAGE TO CONGRESS IN SPECIAL SESSION, JULY 4, 1861⁴

THE ISSUE AT STAKE

This issue embraces more than the fate of these United States. It presents to the whole family of man the question whether a constitutional republic or democracy—a government of the people by the same people—can or cannot maintain its territorial integrity against its own domestic foes. It presents the question whether discontented individuals, too few in numbers to control administration according to organic law in any case, can always, upon the pretenses made in this case, or on any other pretenses, or arbitrarily without any pretense, break up their government, and thus practically put an end to free government upon the earth. It forces us to ask: “Is there, in all republics, this inherent and fatal weakness?” “Must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its own people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?”

So viewing the issue, no choice was left but to call out the war power of the government; and so to resist force employed for its destruction, by force for its preservation. . . .

Our popular government has often been called an experiment. Two points in it our people have already settled—the successful establishing and the successful administering of it. One still remains—its successful maintenance against a formidable internal attempt to overthrow it. It is now for them to demonstrate to the world that those who can fairly carry an election can also suppress a rebellion; that ballots are the rightful and peaceful successors of bullets; and that when ballots have fairly and constitutionally decided, there can be no successful appeal back to bullets; that there can be no successful appeal, except to ballots themselves, at succeeding elections. Such will be a great lesson of peace: teaching men that what they cannot take by an election, neither can they take it by a war; teaching all the folly of being the beginners of a war.

FROM MESSAGE TO CONGRESS IN SPECIAL SESSION, JULY 4, 1861^e

Soldiers! I am greatly obliged to you, and to all who have come forward at the call of their country. I wish it might be more generally and universally understood what the country is now engaged in. We have, as all will agree, a free government, where every man has a right to be equal with every other man. In this great struggle, this form of government and every form of human right is endangered if our enemies succeed. There is more involved in this contest than is realized by everyone. There is involved in this struggle the question whether your children and my children shall enjoy the privileges we have enjoyed. I say this in order to impress upon you, if you are not already so impressed, that no small matter should divert us from our great purpose.

FROM ADDRESS TO THE 164TH OHIO REGIMENT, AUG. 18, 1864^e

THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS *

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be

* This, the most famous of all of Lincoln's addresses, was delivered on the occasion of the dedication of the Gettysburg National Cemetery.

here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to the cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

NOV. 19, 1863⁷

THE NATION'S CAPITAL MUST BE DEFENDED

You, gentlemen, come here to me and ask for peace on any terms, and yet have no word of condemnation for those who are making war on us. You express great horror of bloodshed, and yet would not lay a straw in the way of those who are organizing in Virginia and elsewhere to capture this city. The rebels attack Fort Sumter, and your citizens attack troops sent to the defense of the Government, and the lives and property in Washington, and yet you would have me break my oath and surrender the Government without a blow. There is no Washington in that—no Jackson in that—no manhood nor honor in that. I have no desire to invade the South; but I must have troops to defend this Capital. Geographically it lies surrounded by the soil of Maryland; and mathematically the necessity exists that they should come over her territory. Our men are not moles, and can't dig under the earth; they are not birds, and can't fly through the air. There is no way but to march across, and that they must do. But in doing this there is no need of collision. Keep your rowdies in Baltimore, and there will be no bloodshed.* Go home and tell your people that if they will not attack us, we will not attack them; but if they do attack us, we will return it, and that severely.

REPLY TO A BALTIMORE COMMITTEE, APRIL 28, 1861⁸

* The committee urged the President not to allow soldiers to march through Maryland.

TAKE THE OFFENSIVE!

1. Let the plan for making the blockade effective be pushed forward with all possible dispatch.
2. Let the volunteer forces at Fort Monroe and vicinity under General Butler be constantly drilled, disciplined, and instructed without more for the present.
3. Let Baltimore be held as now, with a gentle but firm and certain hand.
4. Let the force now under Patterson and Banks be strengthened and made secure in its position.
5. Let the forces in Western Virginia act till further orders according to instructions or orders from General McClellan.
6. [Let] General Frémont push forward his organization and operations in the West as rapidly as possible, giving rather special attention to Missouri.
7. Let the forces late before Manassas, except the three-months men, be reorganized as rapidly as possible in their camps here and about Arlington.
8. Let the three-months forces who decline to enter the longer service be discharged as rapidly as circumstances will permit.
9. Let the new volunteer forces be brought forward as fast as possible, and especially into the camps on the two sides of the river here.

When the foregoing shall have been substantially attended to:

1. Let Manassas Junction (or some point on one or other of the railroads near it) and Strasburg be seized and permanently held, with an open line from Washington to Manassas, and an open line from Harper's Ferry to Strasburg—the military men to find the way of doing these.
2. This done, a joint movement from Cairo on Memphis, and from Cincinnati on East Tennessee.*

MEMORANDA OF MILITARY POLICY, JULY 23, 27, 1861⁹

* This was written directly after the defeat suffered by the Union army at Bull Run. The first nine items were jotted down on July 22 and copied

Ordered. That the 22d day of February, 1862, be the day for a general movement of all the land and naval forces of the United States against the insurgent forces. That especially the Army of Western Virginia; the Army of the Potomac; the Army of Kentucky; the Army of the Gulf of Mexico; the Army and flotilla at Cairo, and the naval force in the Gulf of Mexico, be ready to move on that day.

That all other forces, both land and naval, with their respective commanders, obey existing orders for the time, and be ready to obey additional orders when duly given.

That the heads of departments, and especially the Secretary of War and of the Navy, with all their subordinates, and the General-in-Chief, with all other commanders and subordinates of land and naval forces, will severally be held to their strict and full responsibilities for prompt execution of this order.

GENERAL WAR ORDER NO. ONE,* JAN. 27, 1862¹¹

I think it is the precise time for you to strike a blow. By delay the enemy will relatively gain upon you—that is, he will gain faster by fortifications and reinforcements than you can by reinforcements alone.

And once more let me tell you it is indispensable to you that you strike a blow. I am powerless to help this. You will do me the justice to remember I always insisted that going down the bay in search of a field, instead of fighting at or near Manassas, was only shifting and not surmounting a difficulty; that we would find the same enemy and the same or equal intrenchments at either place. The country will not fail to note—is noting now—that the present hesitation to move

out on the following day. The two additional items were added on July 27. Thus while many in the North, including Horace Greeley, were raising the cry of surrender or calling for an armistice, Lincoln was making plans for continuing the war and for offensive action by the Union forces.

* The order was issued to force McClellan and other commanders to start moving against the Confederate armies. It was never carried out.

...an intrenched enemy is but the story of Manassas repeated.

FROM LETTER TO GENERAL GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN, APR. 9, 1862¹¹

MAJOR GENERAL McCLELLAN: I have just read your dispatch about sore-tongued and fatigued horses. Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of your army have done since the battle of Antietam that fatigues anything?

TELEGRAM TO GENERAL GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN, OCT. 24, 1862¹²

ON EMANCIPATION

As to the policy I "seem to be pursuing," as you say, I have no means to leave anyone in doubt.

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be "the Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others gone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views.

I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free.

FROM LETTER TO HORACE GREELEY, AUG. 22, 1862¹³

I raise no objections against it [Emancipation] on legal or constitutional grounds; for, as Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, in time of war I suppose I have a right to take any measure which may best subdue the enemy; nor do I urge objections of a moral nature, in view of possible consequences of insurrection and massacre at the South.

I view this matter as a practical war measure, to be decided on according to the advantages or disadvantages it may offer to the suppression of the rebellion.

I admit that slavery is the root of the rebellion, or at least its *sine qua non*. The ambition of politicians may have incited them to act, but they would have been impotent without slavery as their instrument. I will also concede that emancipation would help us in Europe, and convince them that we are incited by something more than ambition. I grant, further, that it would help somewhat at the North, though not so much, I fear, as you and those you represent imagine. Still some additional strength would be added in that way to the war, and then, unquestionably, it would weaken the rebels by drawing off their laborers, which is of great importance....

FROM REPLY TO A COMMITTEE OF RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS,
ASKING THE PRESIDENT TO ISSUE A PROCLAMATION
OF EMANCIPATION, SEPT. 13, 1862¹⁴

Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We—even we here—hold the power and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve. We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last, best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, gener-

...and a way which, if followed, the world will forever
bless and God must forever bless.
FROM ANNUAL MESSAGE TO CONGRESS, DEC. 1, 1862¹⁶

THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held in slavery within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to oppress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, and any in which the people thereof respectively shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall in the absence of strong countervailing testimony be deemed conclusive evidence that such State and the people thereof are not then in rebellion against the United States."

Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary

war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do, publicly proclaimed for the full period of 100 days from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof, respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

"Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana (except the parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terre Bonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the city of New Orleans), Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Anne, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth), and which excepted parts are for the present left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued."

And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States and parts of States are, and henceforward shall be, free; and that the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense, and I recommend to them that, in all cases where allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known that such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I

invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

By the President:

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State

FINAL EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION, JAN. 1, 1863 ¹⁶

DEFENDING THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

I am naturally antislavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think and yet I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it my view that I might take the oath to get power, and break the oath in using that power. I understood, too, that in ordinary civil administration this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. I had publicly declared this many times, and in many ways. And I averred, to this day, I have done no official act in mere deference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery. I did understand, however, that my oath to preserve the Constitution to the best of my ability imposed upon me the duty of preservation, by every indispensable means, that government—that nation, of which that Constitution was the organic law. Was it possible to lose the nation and yet preserve the Constitu-

tion? By general law, life and limb must be protected. often a limb must be amputated to save a life; but a life is never wisely given to save a limb. I felt that measures otherwise unconstitutional might become lawful by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution through the preservation of the nation. Right or wrong, I assume this ground, and now avow it. I could not feel that, to the best of my ability, I had even tried to preserve the Constitution, if, to save slavery or any minor matter, I should permit the wreck of government, country, and Constitution all together. When early in the war, General Frémont attempted military emancipation. I forbade it, because I did not then think it an indispensable necessity. When, a little later, General Cameron, then Secretary of War, suggested the arming of the blacks, I objected because I did not yet think it an indispensable necessity. When, still later, General Hunter attempted military emancipation, I again forbade it, because I did not yet think the indispensable necessity had come. When in March and May and July, 1862, I made earnest and successive appeals to the border States to favor compensated emancipation, I believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation and arming the blacks would come unless averted by that measure. They declined the proposition, and I was, in my best judgment, driven to the alternative of either surrendering the Union, and with it the Constitution, or of laying strong hand upon the colored element. I chose the latter. In choosing it, I hoped for greater gain than loss; but of this, I was not entirely confident. More than a year of trial now shows no loss by it in our foreign relations, none in our home popular sentiment, none in our white military force—no loss by it anyhow or anywhere. On the contrary it shows a gain of quite a hundred and thirty thousand soldiers, seamen, and laborers. These are palpable facts, about which, as facts, there can be no caviling. We have the men; and we could not have had them without the measure.

And now let any Union man who complains of the measure test himself by writing down in one line that he is for sub-

the rebellion by force of arms; and in the next, that he is for taking these hundred and thirty thousand men from the Union side, and placing them where they would be but for the measure he condemns. If he cannot face his case so stated, it is only because he cannot face the truth. I add a word which was not in the verbal conversation. In telling this tale I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but profess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years' struggle, the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man, devised or expected. God alone can claim it. Whether it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North, as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.

FROM LETTER TO A. G. HODGES, APR. 4, 1864 ¹⁷

You dislike the Emancipation Proclamation, and perhaps would have it retracted. You say it is unconstitutional. I think differently. I think the Constitution invests its Commander-in-Chief with the law of war in time of war. The most that can be said—if so much—is that slaves are property. Is there—has there ever been—any question that by the law of war, property, both of enemies and friends, may be taken when needed? And is it not needed whenever taking it helps us, or hurts the enemy? Armies, the world over, destroy enemies' property when they cannot use it; and even destroy their own property to keep it from the enemy. Civilized belligerents do all in their power to help themselves or hurt the enemy, except a few things regarded as barbarous or cruel. Among the exceptions are the massacre of vanquished foes and non-combatants, male and female.

But the proclamation, as law, either is valid or is not valid. If it is not valid, it needs no retraction. If it is valid, it cannot be retracted any more than the dead can be brought to life. Some of you profess to think its retraction would operate

favorably for the Union. Why better after the retraction of the proclamation before the issue? There was more than a year and a half of trial to suppress the rebellion before the proclamation was issued. The last one hundred days of which passed under an explicit notice that it was coming, unless averted by those in power returning to their allegiance. The war has certainly progressed as favorably for us since the issue of the proclamation as before.

I know, as fully as one can know the opinions of others, the some of the commanders of our armies in the field, who have given us our most important successes, believe the emancipation policy and the use of the colored troops constitute the heaviest blow yet dealt to the rebellion, and that at least one of these important successes could not have been achieved when it was but for the aid of black soldiers. Among the commanders holding these views are some who have never had any affinity with what is called Abolitionism, or with Republican party politics, but who hold them purely as military opinions. I submit these opinions as being entitled to some weight against the objections often urged that emancipation and arming the blacks are unwise as military measures, and were not adopted as such in good faith.

You say you will not fight to free Negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you; but no matter. Fight you, then, exclusively, to save the Union. I issued the proclamation on purpose to aid you in saving the Union. Whenever you shall have conquered all resistance to the Union, if I shall urge you to continue fighting, it will be an apt time then for you to declare you will not fight to free Negroes.

I thought that in your struggle for the Union, to whatever extent the Negroes should cease helping the enemy, to that extent it weakened the enemy in his resistance to you. Do you think differently? I thought that whatever Negroes can be got to do as soldiers, leaves just so much less for white soldiers to do in saving the Union. Does it appear otherwise to you? But Negroes, like other people, act upon motives. Why should they do anything for us if we will do nothing for them? If

they make their lives for us they must be prompted by the strongest motive, even the promise of freedom. And the promise, once being made, must be kept.

FROM LETTER TO JAMES C. CONKLING, AUG. 26, 1863 ¹⁸

ON NEGRO TROOPS

I am told you have at least thought of raising a Negro military force. In my opinion the country now needs no specific thing so much as some man of your ability and position to go to this work. When I speak of your position, I mean that of an eminent citizen of a slave State and himself a slaveholder. The colored population is the great available and yet unavailed force for restoring the Union. The bare sight of fifty thousand armed and drilled black soldiers upon the banks of the Mississippi would end the rebellion at once, and who doubts that we can present that sight if we but take hold in earnest? If you have been thinking of it, please do not dismiss the thought.

LETTER TO ANDREW JOHNSON, MAR. 26, 1863 ¹⁹

There are now in the service of the United States nearly two hundred thousand able-bodied colored men, most of them under arms, defending and acquiring Union territory.

The Democratic strategy demands that these forces be disbanded, and that the masters be conciliated by restoring them to slavery. The black men who now assist Union prisoners to escape are to be converted into our enemies, in the vain hope of gaining the good will of their masters. We shall have to fight two nations instead of one.

You can not conciliate the South if you guarantee ultimate success, and the experiences of the present war prove their success is inevitable if you fling the compulsory labor of four millions of black men into their side of the scale.

Will you give our enemies such military advantages as insure success, and then depend upon coaxing, flattery, and concession to get them back into the Union?

Abandon all the forts now garrisoned by black men, take two hundred thousand men from our side, and put them in the battle field or corn field against us, and we would be compelled to abandon the war in three weeks.

MAY, 1864

Come what will, I will keep my faith with friend and foe. My enemies pretend I am now carrying on the war for the sole purpose of abolition. So long as I am president it shall be carried on for the sole purpose of restoring the Union. But no human power can subdue this rebellion without the use of the emancipation policy, and every other policy calculated to weaken the moral and physical forces of the rebellion.

Freedom has given us two hundred thousand men, raised on southern soil. It will give us more yet. Just so much it has abstracted from the enemy, and instead of checking the South there are evidences of a fraternal feeling growing up between our men and the rank and file of the rebel soldiers. Let our enemies prove to the country that the destruction of slavery is not necessary to the restoration of the Union. I will abide the issue.

MAY, 1864

THE FIFTH COLUMN

The rebellion thus begun soon ran into the present civil war; and, in certain respects, it began on very unequal terms between the parties. The insurgents had been preparing for it more than thirty years, while the government had taken no steps to resist them. The former had carefully considered all the means which could be turned to their account. It was undoubtedly was a well-pondered reliance with them that in their own unrestricted effort to destroy Union, Constitution and law, all together, the government would, in great degree, be restrained by the same Constitution and law from arresting their progress. Their sympathizers pervaded all departments of the government and nearly all communities of the people.

From this material, under cover of "liberty of speech," "liberty of the press," and "*habeas corpus*," they hoped to keep on foot amongst us a most efficient corps of spies, informers, suppliers and aiders and abettors of their cause in a thousand ways. They knew that in time such as they were inaugurating, by the Constitution itself the "*habeas corpus*" might be suspended; but they also knew they had friends who would make a question as to who was to suspend it; meanwhile their spies and others might remain at large to help on their cause. Or if, as has happened, the Executive should suspend the writ without ruinous waste of time, instances of arresting innocent persons might occur, as are always likely to occur in such cases; and then a clamor could be raised in regard to this, which might be at least of some service to the insurgent cause. It needed no very keen perception to discover this part of the enemy's program, so soon as by open hostilities their machinery was fairly put in motion. Yet, thoroughly imbued with a reverence for the guaranteed rights of individuals, I was slow to adopt the strong measures which by degrees I have been forced to regard as being within the exceptions of the Constitution, and as indispensable to the public safety. Nothing is better known to history than that courts of justice are utterly incompetent to such cases. Civil courts are organized chiefly for trials of individuals, or, at most, a few individuals acting in concert—and this in quiet times, and on charges of crimes well defined in the law. Even in times of peace, bands of horse-thieves and robbers frequently grow too numerous and powerful for the ordinary courts of justice. But what comparison, in numbers, have such bands ever borne to the insurgent sympathizers even in many of the loyal States? Again, a jury too frequently has at least one member more ready to hang the panel than to hang the traitor. And yet again, he who dissuades one man from volunteering, or induces one soldier to desert, weakens the Union cause as much as he who kills a Union soldier in battle. Yet this dissuasion or inducement may be so conducted as to be no defined crime of which any civil court would take cognizance....

Long experience has shown that armies cannot be maintained unless desertion shall be punished by the severe penalty of death. The case requires, and the law and the Constitution sanction, this punishment. Must I shoot a simple-minded soldier boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wily agitator who induces him to desert? This is none the less injurious when effected by getting a father, or brother, or friend into a public meeting, and there working upon his feelings till he is persuaded to write the soldier boy that he is fighting in a bad cause, for a wicked administration of a contemptible government, too weak to arrest and punish him if he shall desert. I think that, in such a case, to silence him as an agitator and save the boy is not only constitutional, but withal a great mercy.

If I be wrong on this question of constitutional power, my error lies in believing that certain proceedings are constitutional when, in cases of rebellion or invasion, the public safety requires them, which would not be constitutional when, in absence of rebellion or invasion, the public safety does not require them: in other words, that the Constitution is not in its application in all respects the same in cases of rebellion or invasion involving the public safety, as it is in times of profound peace and public security. The Constitution itself makes the distinction, and I can no more be persuaded that the government can constitutionally take no strong measures in time of rebellion, because it can be shown that the same could not be lawfully taken in time of peace, than I can be persuaded that a particular drug is not good medicine for a sick man because it can be shown to not be good food for a well one. Nor am I able to appreciate the danger apprehended by the meeting, that the American people will by means of military arrests during the rebellion lose the right of public discussion, the liberty of speech and the press, the law of evidence, trial by jury, and *habeas corpus* through the indefinite peaceful future which I trust lies before them, any more than I am able to believe that a man could contract so strong an appetite for emetics during temporary illness as to persist

feeding upon them during the remainder of his healthful life....

FROM LETTER TO ERASTUS CORNING AND OTHERS,*
JUNE 12, 1863 ²¹

You ask, in substance, whether I really claim that I may override all the guaranteed rights of individuals, on the plea of conserving the public safety—when I may choose to say the public safety requires it. The question, divested of the phraseology calculated to represent me struggling for an arbitrary personal prerogative, is either simply a question who shall decide, or an information that nobody shall decide, what the public safety does require in cases of rebellion or invasion. The Constitution contemplates the question as likely to occur for decision, but it does not expressly declare who is to decide it. By necessary implication, when rebellion or invasion comes, the decision is to be made, from time to time; and I think the man whom, for the time, the people have, under the Constitution, made the Commander-in-Chief of their army and navy, is the man who holds the power and bears the responsibility of making it. If he uses the power justly, the same people will probably justify him; if he abuses it, he is in their hands to be dealt with by all the modes they have reserved to themselves in the Constitution.

You claim that men may, if they choose, embarrass those whose duty it is to combat a giant rebellion, and then be dealt with in turn, only as if there were no rebellion. The Constitution itself rejects this.

FROM LETTER TO M. BIRCHARD AND OTHERS, JUNE 29, 1863 ²²

*Corning, a New York millionaire, together with a committee representing the New York Democrats, had protested the arrest of Clement L. Vallandigham and other Copperheads. Vallandigham had been arrested for deliberately defying a military order prohibiting treasonous utterances. He was later deported by Lincoln to the Confederacy.

ON ELECTIONS DURING A WAR

We cannot have free government without elections; and if the rebellion could force us to forego or postpone a national election, it might fairly claim to have already conquered and ruined us. The strife of the election is but human nature practically applied to the facts of the case. What has occurred in this case must ever recur in similar cases. Human nature will not change. In any future great national trial, compared with the men of this, we shall have as weak and as strong, as silly and as wise, as bad and as good. Let us, therefore, study the incidents of this as philosophy to learn wisdom from, and none of them as wrongs to be revenged. But the election, along with its incidental and undesirable strife, has done good too. It has demonstrated that a people's government can sustain a national election in the midst of a great civil war. Until now, it has not been known to the world that this was a possibility. It shows, also, how sound and how strong we still are. It shows that, even among candidates of the same party, he who is most devoted to the Union and most opposed to treason can receive most of the people's votes. It shows, also, to the extent yet known, that we have more men now than we had when the war began. Gold is good in its place, but living, brave, patriotic men are better than gold.

FROM RESPONSE TO SERENADE ON THE OCCASION OF
RE-ELECTION, NOV. 10, 1864²⁹

LETTERS OF CONDOLENCE

MY DEAR SIR AND MADAM: In the untimely loss of your noble son, our affliction here is scarcely less than your own. So much of promised usefulness to one's country, and of bright hopes for one's self and friends, have rarely been so suddenly dashed as in his fall. In size, in years, and in youthful appearance a boy only, his power to command men was surpassingly great. This power, combined with a fine intellect, an indomitable energy, and a taste altogether military, con-

stituted in him, as seemed to me, the best natural talent in that department I ever knew.

And yet he was singularly modest and deferential in social intercourse. My acquaintance with him began less than two years ago; yet through the latter half of the intervening period it was as intimate as the disparity of our ages and my engrossing engagements would permit. To me he appeared to have no indulgences or pastimes; and I never heard him utter a profane or an intemperate word. What was conclusive of his good heart, he never forgot his parents. The honors he labored for so laudably, and for which in the sad end he so gallantly gave his life, he meant for them no less than for himself.

In the hope that it may be no intrusion upon the sacredness of your sorrow, I have ventured to address you this tribute to the memory of my young friend and your brave and early fallen child.

May God give you that consolation which is beyond all earthly power.

LETTER TO PARENTS OF COLONEL ELLSWORTH,* MAY 25, 1861²⁴

DEAR MADAM: I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant-General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the

* Ellsworth was the first commissioned officer killed in the Civil War. He was shot and killed by the proprietor of the Marshall House in Alexandria, Virginia, during an attempt to take down a Confederate flag flying from the roof of the hotel. Ellsworth had read law in Lincoln's office in Springfield, and had accompanied the President-elect on his trip to Washington.

loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

LETTER TO MRS. LYDIA BIXBY OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS,
NOV. 21, 1864 • 28

THE WOMEN OF AMERICA

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: I appear to say but a word. This extraordinary war in which we are engaged falls heavily upon all classes of people, but the most heavily upon the soldier. For it has been said, all that a man hath will he give for his life, and while all contribute of their substance, the soldier puts his life at stake, and often yields it up in his country's cause. The highest merit, then, is due to the soldier.

In this extraordinary war, extraordinary developments have manifested themselves, such as have not been seen in former wars; and amongst these manifestations nothing has been more remarkable than these fairs for the relief of suffering soldiers and their families.† And the chief agents in these fairs are the women of America.

I am not accustomed to the use of language of eulogy; I have never studied the art of paying compliments to women; but I must say, that if all that has been said by orators and poets since the creation of the world in praise of women were applied to the women of America, it would not do them justice for their conduct during this war. I will close by saying, God bless the women of America.

REMARKS AT A SANITARY FAIR IN WASHINGTON, MAR. 18, 1864 • 29

* This is Lincoln's most celebrated letter. It was reprinted in newspapers all over the country. It was revealed later that only two of Mrs. Bixby's sons had been killed. The letter has been called "The Beautiful Blunder."

† These fairs were held by voluntary sanitary commissions in many cities. The commissions used the money raised at the fairs to purchase medical supplies, delicacies, books, etc., for the soldiers.

ON PEACE

Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.

FROM SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS, MAR. 4, 1864 • 27

In presenting the abandonment of armed resistance to the national authority on the part of the insurgents as the only indispensable condition to ending the war on the part of the Government, I retract nothing heretofore said as to slavery. I repeat the declaration made a year ago, that "while I remain in my present position I shall not attempt to retract or modify the emancipation proclamation, nor shall I return to slavery any person who is free by the terms of that proclamation or by any of the acts of Congress." If the people should, by whatever mode or means, make it an Executive duty to re-enslave such persons, another, and not I, must be their instrument to perform it.

In stating a single condition of peace I mean simply to say that the war will cease on the part of the Government whenever it shall have ceased on the part of those who began it.

FROM ANNUAL MESSAGE TO CONGRESS, DEC. 6, 1864 • 28

ON RECONSTRUCTION

We all agree that the seceded States, so called, are out of their proper practical relation with the Union, and that the sole object of the government, civil and military, in regard to those States, is to again get them into that proper practical relation. I believe that it is not only possible, but in fact easier, to do this without deciding or even considering whether these States have ever been out of the Union, than with it. Finding themselves safely at home, it would be utterly immaterial whether they had ever been abroad. Let us all join in doing the acts necessary to restoring the proper practical relations between these States and the Union, and each forever innocently indulge his own opinion whether in doing the acts he brought the States from without into the Union, or only gave them proper assistance, they never having been out of it. The amount of constituency, so to speak, on which the new Louisiana government rests, would be more satisfactory to all if it contained 50,000 or 30,000, or even 20,000, instead of only about 12,000, as it does. It is also unsatisfactory to some that the elective franchise is not given to the colored man. I would myself prefer that it were now conferred on the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers.

Still, the question is not whether the Louisiana government, as it stands, is quite all that is desirable. The question is, will it be wiser to take it as it is and help to improve it, or to reject and disperse it? Can Louisiana be brought into proper practical relation with the Union sooner by sustaining or by discarding her new State government? Some twelve thousand voters in the heretofore slave State of Louisiana have sworn allegiance to the Union, assumed to be the rightful political power of the State, held elections, organized a State government, adopted a free-State constitution, giving the benefit of public schools equally to black and white, and empowering the legislature to confer the elective franchise upon the colored man. Their legislature has already voted to ratify the constitutional amendment recently passed by Congress, abolishing

slavery throughout the nation. These 12,000 persons are thus fully committed to the Union and to perpetual freedom in the State—committed to the very things, and nearly all the things, the nation wants—and they ask the nation's recognition and its assistance to make good their committal.

Now, if we reject and spurn them, we do our utmost to disorganize and disperse them. We, in effect, say to the white man: You are worthless or worse; we will neither help you, nor be helped by you. To the blacks we say: This cup of liberty which these, your old masters, hold to your lips we will dash from you, and leave you to the chances of gathering the spilled and scattered contents in some vague and undefined when, where, and how. If this course, discouraging and paralyzing both white and black, has any tendency to bring Louisiana into proper practical relations with the Union, I have so far been unable to perceive it. If, on the contrary, we recognize and sustain the new government of Louisiana, the converse of all this is made true. We encourage the hearts and nerve the arms of the 12,000 to adhere to their work, and argue for it, and proselyte for it, and fight for it, and feed it, and grow it, and ripen it to a complete success. The colored man, too, in seeing all united for him, is inspired with vigilance, and energy, and daring, to the same end. Grant that he desires the elective franchise, will he not attain it sooner by saving the already advanced steps toward it than by running backward over them? Concede that the new government of Louisiana is only what it should be as the egg is to the fowl, we shall sooner have the fowl by hatching the egg than by smashing it.

FROM LAST PUBLIC ADDRESS, APR. 11, 1865

IV. LABOR

LABOR IS PRIOR TO CAPITAL

Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration. Capital has its rights, which are as worthy of protection as any other rights. Nor is it denied that there is, and probably always will be, a relation between labor and capital producing mutual benefits. The error is in assuming that the whole labor of the community exists within that relation. A few men own capital, and that few avoid labor themselves, and with their capital hire or buy another few to labor for them.

FROM ANNUAL MESSAGE TO CONGRESS, DEC. 3, 1861

INTERNATIONAL LABOR SOLIDARITY

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the address and resolutions which you sent me on the eve of the new year. When I came, on the 4th of March, 1861, through a free and constitutional election to preside in the Government of the United States, the country was found at the verge of civil war. Whatever might have been the cause, or whosoever the fault, one duty, paramount to all others, was before me, namely, to maintain and preserve at once the Constitution and the integrity of the Federal Republic. A conscientious purpose to perform this duty is the key to all the measures of administration which have been and to all which will here-

after be pursued. Under our frame of government and my official oath, I could not depart from this purpose if I would. It is not always in the power of governments to enlarge or restrict the scope of moral results which follow the policies that they may deem it necessary for the public safety from time to time to adopt.

I have understood well that the duty of self-preservation rests solely with the American people; but I have at the same time been aware that favor or disfavor of foreign nations might have a material influence in enlarging or prolonging the struggle with disloyal men in which the country is engaged. A fair examination of influences of the United States were generally regarded as having been beneficial toward mankind. I have, therefore, reckoned upon the forbearance of nations. Circumstances—to some of which you kindly allude—induce me especially to expect that if justice and good faith should be practiced by the United States, they would encounter no hostile influence on the part of Great Britain. It is now a pleasant duty to acknowledge the demonstration you have given of your desire that a spirit of amity and peace toward this country may prevail in the councils of your Queen, who is respected and esteemed in your own country only more than she is by the kindred nation which has its home on this side of the Atlantic.

I know and deeply deplore the sufferings which the workmen at Manchester, and in all Europe, are called to endure in this crisis. It has been often and studiously represented that the attempt to overthrow this government, which was built upon the foundation of human rights, and to substitute for it one which should rest exclusively on the basis of human slavery, was likely to obtain the favor of Europe. Through the action of our disloyal citizens, the workmen of Europe have been subjected to severe trials, for the purpose of forcing their sanction to that attempt. Under the circumstances, I cannot but regard your decisive utterances upon the question as an instance of sublime Christian heroism which has not been surpassed in any age or in any country. It is indeed an energetic

and re-inspiring assurance of the inherent power of truth, and of the ultimate and universal triumph of justice, humanity and freedom.* I do not doubt that the sentiments you have expressed will be sustained by your great nation; and, on the other hand, I have no hesitation in assuring you that they will excite admiration, esteem and the most reciprocal feelings of friendship among the American people. I hail this interchange of sentiment, therefore, as an augury that whatever else may happen, whatever misfortune may befall your country or my own, the peace and friendship which now exist between the two nations will be, as it shall be my desire to make them, perpetual.

LETTER TO THE WORKINGMEN OF MANCHESTER, ENGLAND,
JAN. 19, 1863²

The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside of the family relation, should be one uniting all working people, of all nations, and tongues, and kindreds.

FROM REPLY TO A COMMITTEE FROM THE NEW YORK
WORKINGMEN'S ASSOCIATION, MAR. 21, 1864³

LABOR AND GOVERNMENT

In the early days of our race the Almighty said to the first of our race, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"; and since then, if we except the light and the air of heaven, no good thing has been or can be enjoyed by us without having first cost labor. And inasmuch as most good things are produced by labor, it follows that all such things of right belong to those whose labor has produced them. But it has so happened, in all ages of the world, that some have labored, and others have without labor enjoyed a large proportion of the

* The reference is to an address to Lincoln sent by the workingmen of Manchester upholding the Northern cause. This address came from workers who were on the verge of starvation owing to the cotton famine in England caused by the Union blockade of the Southern ports.

fruits. This is wrong, and should not continue. To secure to each laborer the whole product of his labor, or as nearly as possible, is a worthy object of any good government.

FROM NOTES FOR A TARIFF DISCUSSION, DEC. 1, 1847[?]⁴

I agree with you, Mr. Chairman, that the workingmen are the basis of all governments, for the plain reason that they are the more numerous.

FROM AN ADDRESS TO THE GERMANS AT CINCINNATI, OHIO,
FEB. 12, 1861⁵

LABOR IN SOCIETY

Labor is the great source from which nearly all, if not all, human comforts and necessities are drawn. There is a difference in opinion about the elements of labor in society. Some men assume that there is a necessary connection between capital and labor, and that connection draws within the whole of the labor of the community. They assume that nobody works unless capital excites them to work. They begin next to consider what is the best way. They say there are but two ways—one is to hire men and to allure them to labor by their consent; the other is to buy the men and drive them to it, and that is slavery. Having assumed that, they proceed to discuss the question of whether the laborers themselves are better off in the condition of slaves or of hired laborers, and they usually decide that they are better off in the condition of slaves.

In the first place, I say that the whole thing is a mistake. That there is a certain relation between capital and labor, I admit. That it does exist, and rightfully exists, I think is true. That men who are industrious and sober and honest in the pursuit of their own interests should after a while accumulate capital, and after that should be allowed to enjoy it in peace, and also if they should choose, when they have accumulated it, to use it to save themselves from actual labor, and hire other people to labor for them, is right. In doing so, they do not wrong the man they employ, for they find men who have

not their own land to work upon, or shops to work in, and who are benefited by working for others—hired laborers, retaining their capital for it. Thus a few men that own capital hire a few others, and these establish the relation of capital and labor rightly—a relation of which I make no complaint. But I miss that that relation, after all, does not embrace more than one-eighth of the labor of the country.

FROM SPEECH AT CINCINNATI, SEPT. 17, 1859¹

LABOR AND EDUCATION

The old general rule was that educated people did not perform manual labor. They managed to eat their bread, leaving the toil of producing it to the uneducated. This was not an insupportable evil to the working bees, so long as the class of drones remained very small. But now, especially in these free States, nearly all are educated—quite too nearly all to leave the labor of the uneducated in any wise adequate to the support of the whole. It follows from this that henceforth educated people must labor. Otherwise, education itself would become a positive and intolerable evil. No country can sustain in idleness more than a small percentage of its numbers. The great majority must labor at something productive. From these premises the problem springs, "How can labor and education be the most satisfactorily combined?"

By the "mud-sill" theory * it is assumed that labor and education are incompatible, and any practical combination of them impossible. According to that theory, a blind horse upon a tread-mill is a perfect illustration of what a laborer should be—all the better for being blind, that he could not kick understandingly. According to that theory, the education of laborers is not only useless but pernicious and dangerous. In fact, it is, in some sort, deemed a misfortune that laborers should have heads at all. Those same heads are regarded as

* The doctrine proclaimed by Southern defenders of slavery that labor, slave or free, had to be controlled by capital. Some even asserted that all workers, regardless of color, should be enslaved.

explosive materials, only to be safely kept in damp places, as far as possible from that peculiar sort of fire which ignites them. A Yankee who could invent a strong-handed man without a head would receive the everlasting gratitude of the "mud-sill" advocates.

But free labor says, "No." Free labor argues that as the Author of man makes every individual with one head and one pair of hands, it was probably intended that heads and hands should co-operate as friends, and that that particular head should direct and control that pair of hands. As each man has one mouth to be fed, and one pair of hands to furnish food, it was probably intended that that particular pair of hands should feed that particular mouth—that each head is the natural guardian, director, and protector of the hands and mouth inseparably connected with it, and that being so, every head should be cultivated and improved by whatever will add to its capacity for performing its charge. In one word, free labor insists on universal education.

I have so far stated the opposite theories of "mud-sill" and "free labor," without declaring any preference of my own between them. On an occasion like this, I ought not to declare any. I suppose, however, I shall not be mistaken in assuming as a fact that the people of Wisconsin prefer free labor, with its natural companion, education.

FROM ADDRESS BEFORE THE WISCONSIN STATE AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY, MILWAUKEE, SEPT. 30, 1859²

THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

I am glad to see that a system of labor prevails in New England under which laborers can strike when they want to, where they are not obliged to work under all circumstances, and are not tied down and obliged to labor whether you pay them or not! I like the system which lets a man quit when he wants to, and wish it might prevail everywhere. One of the reasons why I am opposed to slavery is just here.

FROM SPEECH AT NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT, MAR. 6, 1860³

I know the trials and woes of working men, and I have always felt for them. I know that in almost every case of strikes, the men have just cause for complaint.

FROM REPLY TO DELEGATION OF NEW YORK MACHINISTS
AND BLACKSMITHS UNION, FEB. 1864

ON WAGES OF WORKING WOMEN

I know not how much is within the legal power of the government in this case; but it is certainly true in equity, that the laboring women in our employment should be paid at the least as much as they were at the beginning of the war. Will the Secretary of War please have the cases fully examined, and so much relief given as can be consistently with the law and the public service.

LETTER TO SECRETARY STANTON, JULY 27, 1864

APPENDICES

I. REPORT BY FREDERICK DOUGLASS OF HIS INTERVIEW WITH LINCOLN AT THE WHITE HOUSE, AUGUST, 1863.*

I have been down there to see the President, and as you were not there, perhaps you may like to know how the President of the United States received a black man at the White House.

I will tell you how he received me—just as you have seen one gentleman receive another [Great applause], with a hand and a voice well-balanced between a kind cordiality and a respectful reserve. I tell you I felt big there! [Laughter.]

Let me tell you how I got to him; because every body can't get to him. He has to be a little guarded in admitting spectators. The manner of getting to him gave me an idea that the cause was rolling on. The stairway was crowded with applicants. Some of them looked eager; and I have no doubt some of them had a purpose in being there and wanted to see the President for the good of the country!

They were white; and as I was the only dark spot among them, I expected to have to wait at least half a day; I had heard of men waiting a week; but in two minutes after I sent in my card, the messenger came out, and respectfully invited "Mr. Douglass" in.

I could hear, in the eager multitude outside, as they saw me pressing and elbowing my way through, the remark, "Yes, damn it, I knew they would let the nigger through," in a kind of despairing voice—a Peace Democrat, I suppose. [Laughter.]

* Proceedings of the American Anti-Slavery Society at Its Third Decade, Held in the City of Philadelphia, Dec. 3-4, 1863 (New York, 1864), pp. 116-18.

When I went in, the President was sitting in his usual position. I was told, with his feet in different parts of the room, taking it easy. [Laughter.] Don't put this down, Mr. Reporter, I pray you; for I am going down there again to-morrow! [Laughter.]

As I came in and approached him, the President began to rise. [Laughter] and he continued rising until he stood over me [Laughter]; and, reaching out his hand, he said, "Mr. Douglass, I know you: I have read about you, and Mr. Seward has told me about you"; putting me quite at ease at once.

Now, you will want to know how I was impressed by him. I will tell you that, too. He impressed me as being just what every one of you have been in the habit of calling him—an honest man. [Applause.] I never met with a man, who, on the first blush, impressed me more entirely with his sincerity, with his devotion to his country, and with his determination to save it at all hazards. [Applause.]

He told me (I think he did me more honor than I deserve) that I had made a little speech, somewhere in New York, and it had got into the papers, and among the things I had said was this: That if I were called upon to state what I regarded as the most sad and most disheartening feature in our present political and military situation, it would not be the various disasters experienced by our armies and our navies, on flood and field, but it would be the tardy, hesitating, vacillating policy of the President of the United States; and the President said to me, "Mr. Douglass, I have been charged with being tardy, and the like"; and he went on, and partly admitted that he might seem slow; but he said, "I am charged with vacillating; but, Mr. Douglass, I do not think that charge can be sustained; I think it cannot be shown that when I have once taken a position, I have ever retreated from it." [Applause.]

That I regarded as the most significant point in what he said during our interview. I told him that he had been somewhat slow in proclaiming equal protection to our colored soldiers and prisoners; and he said that the country needed talking up to that point. He hesitated in regard to it, when he felt that

the country was not ready for it. He knew that the colored man throughout this country was a despised man, a hated man, and that if he at first came out with such a proclamation, all the hatred which is poured on the head of the Negro race would be visited on his administration.

He said that there was preparatory work needed, and that that preparatory work had now been done. And he said, "Remember this, Mr. Douglass; remember that Milliken's Bend, Port Hudson and Fort Wagner* are recent events; and that these were necessary to prepare the way for this very proclamation of mine."

I thought it was reasonable, but came to the conclusion that while Abraham Lincoln will not go down to posterity as Abraham the Great, or as Abraham the Wise, or as Abraham the Eloquent, although he is all three, wise, great and eloquent, he will go down to posterity, if the country is saved, as Honest Abraham [Applause]; and going down thus, his name may be written anywhere in this wide world of ours side by side with that of Washington, without disparaging the latter. [Renewed applause.]

But we are not to be saved by the captain, at this time, but by the crew. We are not to be saved by Abraham Lincoln, but by that power behind the throne, greater than the throne itself. You and I and all of us have this matter in hand.

* Places where battles were fought in which Negro soldiers distinguished themselves for bravery.

II. REPORT BY RABBI ISAAC M. WISE OF HIS INTERVIEW WITH LINCOLN AT THE WHITE HOUSE, JANUARY, 1863 *

We went to the White House in our traveling habiliments and spoke about half an hour to the President of the United States in an open and frank manner and were dismissed in the same simple style. Having expressed our thanks for his promptness and dispatch in revoking Grant's order† the President gave utterance to his surprise that such an order should have been issued. "I don't like to see a class or nationality condemned on account of a few sinners," he said. The President fully convinced us that he knows of no distinction between Jews and Gentiles and that he feels no prejudice against any nationality and especially against the Israelites. We had little chance to say anything, the President being so splendidly eloquent on this occasion. He spoke like a simple, plain citizen and tried in various forms to convince us of the sincerity of his words on this matter.

* *Proceedings of the American-Jewish Historical Society* (1909), Vol. XVII, pp. 119-20.

† General Grant issued an order expelling all Jews from the area of his command.

III. ADDRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKINGMEN'S ASSOCIATION TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN, JANUARY, 1865.*

To Abraham Lincoln,
President of the United States of America.

Sir,

We congratulate the American people upon your re-election by a large majority. If resistance to the Slave Power was the reserved watchword of your first election, the triumphant war cry of your re-election is Death to Slavery.

From the commencement of the titanic American strife the workingmen of Europe felt instinctively that the star-spangled banner carried the destiny of their class. The contest of the territories which opened the dire epopee, was it not to decide whether the virgin soil of immense tracts should be wedded to the labor of the emigrant or prostituted by the tramp of the slave driver?

When an oligarchy of 300,000 slaveholders dared to inscribe for the first time in the annals of the world "slavery" on the banner of armed revolt, when on the very spots where hardly a century ago the idea of one great democratic republic had first sprung up, whence the first Declaration of the Rights of Man was issued, and the first impulse given to the European revolution of the eighteenth century; when on those very spots counter-revolution, with systematic thoroughness, gloried in rescinding "the ideas entertained at the time of the forma-

* The International Workingmen's Association was founded in 1864 by Socialist and trade union representatives from various European countries. Immediately after its formation, the Association came out in support of the American Union. This address was written by Karl Marx, one of the leaders of the Association.

tion of the old constitution," and maintained "slavery to be a beneficent institution," indeed, the only solution of the great problem of the "relation of capital to labor," and cynically proclaimed property in man "the cornerstone of the new edifice"—then the working classes of Europe understood at once, even before the fanatic partisanship of the upper classes for the Confederate gentry had given its dismal warning, that the slaveholders' rebellion was to sound the tocsin for a general holy crusade of property against labor, and that for the men of labor, with their hopes for the future, even their past conquests were at stake in that tremendous conflict on the other side of the Atlantic. Everywhere, therefore, they bore patiently the hardships imposed upon them by the cotton crisis, opposed enthusiastically the pro-slavery intervention—opportunities of their betters—and, from most parts of Europe, contributed their quota of blood to the good cause.

While the workingmen, the true political power of the North, allowed slavery to defile their own republic, while before the Negro, mastered and sold without his concurrence, they boasted it the highest prerogative of the white-skinned laborer to sell himself and choose his own master, they were unable to attain the true freedom of labor, or to support their European brethren in their struggle for emancipation; but this barrier to progress has been swept off by the red sea of civil war.

The workingmen of Europe feel sure that, as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the middle class, so the American anti-slavery war will do for the working classes. They consider it an earnest of the epoch to come that it fell to the lot of Abraham Lincoln, the single-minded son of the working class, to lead the country through the matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained race and the reconstruction of a social world.

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All references to *Nicolay and Hay* are to John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, twelve volumes, New York, 1905. All references to *Lapsley* are to Arthur Brooks Lapsley, *Writings of Abraham Lincoln*, eight volumes, New York, 1905-06. All references to *Hertz* are to Emanuel Hertz, *Abraham Lincoln: A New Portrait*, Volume Two, New York, 1931. Selections from this volume are reprinted with the permission of the publishers, Horace Liveright and Company.

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6. *Ibid.* V, 229-30.
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